SERIOUS ROAD-TRIPPING: A STUDY OF SERIOUS AND
PROJECT-BASED LEISURE IN SELF-DRIVE RECREATIONISTS
IN ALASKA

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by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation was to explore Stebbins’ new theory of project-based leisure (2005), particularly in the context of the leisure activity of Alaskan self-drive recreation. No research related to project-based leisure has yet been published, and thus it has not been supported by any studies. Self-drive recreation, while it has received some academic attention in recent years (Carson & Waller, 2002), has largely been ignored in leisure studies despite its apparent mass popularity. Thus, in studying these two phenomena in relation to each other, it was hoped that a deeper understanding could be gained of both. To that end, three related investigations were undertaken.

The first study tested and found through qualitative means that self-drive recreation can be classified as project-based leisure and/or—as a plethora of previous studies have examined for other activities—its parent theoretical construct, serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982). This study also found that the delineation between serious and project-based leisure is likely highly subjective, and that self-drive recreation has extraordinarily high indicators of dedication in some participants, as well as unusual patterns of participation rates that further raised questions about how the frequency of partaking in a recreational pursuit relates to its being classifiable as serious or project-based.

The second study employed quantitative means to determine if they were suitable for use in classifying recreational activities as serious/project-based leisure or not, as such methods have never been tested before. Through the use of confirmatory factor analysis by structural equation modeling (Byrnes, 2001), it was determined that although it was not perfectly demonstrated in this study, that such use of quantitative means would likely
be possible. Perfect results were probably not obtained in this analysis due to the fact that this was an initial exploratory study in this area, and thus there was no precedent for appropriate survey items. Several items developed for this analysis were likely faulty, though most of the others worked well and produced nearly-complete models.

The third study examined differences in demographics, enjoyment, constraints, and activity identification between project-based and serious self-drive recreationists. It was determined that serious devotees are more likely to be older and thus retired, indicating that free time is the biggest constraint. Serious drivers are also likely to identify more strongly with their activity. Both groups had high levels of enjoyment, and they also had some differences between their feelings towards various leisure constraints. Therefore, it appears that enjoyment is the largest factor in determining if project-based self-drive participants will want to become serious ones, and the removal of the constraint of not enough discretionary time allows for that change. It was also determined that early project-based self-drive trips, if they provide enough enjoyment, can serve as markers or turning points in leisure careers (Kane & Zink, 2004) if the activity is indeed later adopted as a serious pursuit.

These studies lend support to Stebbins’ notion of project-based leisure (2005), and expand his over-arching serious leisure theory by providing some evidence of its existence and relationship to serious leisure, while at the same time discovering some areas for future study and clarification. The studies also delved into self-drive recreation and found that it has unique characteristics, especially related to participation rates,
frequencies, and expenditures, that have not been addressed in previous studies. This oft-overlooked activity could thus become more attractive as a laboratory for those interested in examining leisure concepts, as well as increase understanding of this travel market that may be useful to tourism interests in Alaska and northwestern Canada.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Self-drive recreation, or “road-tripping”, is an incredibly popular activity in many industrialized nations (Carson & Waller, 2002; Olsen, 2002; Destination Analysts, Inc., 2006), so much so that it has become part of the popular culture of many countries, especially the United States (Cohan & Hark, 1997; Laderman, 2002; Mills, 2006). This leisure activity is nearly as old as the automobile itself, and has been fashionable with the masses in the U.S. since the introduction of Ford’s Model T in 1908 (Hugill, 1985; Rothman, 1998). Surprisingly, despite this century-old popularity and ubiquitousness, self-drive recreation has received precious little attention in peer-reviewed literature. Although it often received mention or was compared with other modes of travel, it has only been in the last decade that the self-drive segment has received dedicated attention from a handful of academics, especially in Australia (Carson et al., 2002). With 88.3% of U.S. pleasure trips in 2006 estimated to have been taken in automobiles (Destination Analysts, Inc., 2006), this is clearly an important recreation and travel market, and in fact the North American propensity to take road trips in the summer is frequently cited as the reason for the increased demand and thus elevated prices of oil and gasoline worldwide between Memorial Day and Labor Day (Tse & Kirkham, 2006).

It is perplexing why a recreational activity of such popularity and global economic impact has gone so unstudied while other far less popular activities, such as whitewater rafting, have received many times the attention (Fluker & Turner, 2000; Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Tarrant & English, 1996). Possibly, this lack of research
stems from the apparent stigma of road-tripping as being a mundane and unadventurous pastime that has long haunted the activity (Plog, 1973). Whatever the reason for its neglect in the past, the giant market of self-drive recreation clearly deserves increased academic attention. The few studies performed on self-drive recreation have largely focused on understanding different segments within the market, trying to understand the economic impact on communities affected by road travelers, or analyzing the use of particular routes (Carson et al., 2002; Laws & Scott, 2003; Pennington-Gray, 2003; Hardy, 2003). Although such studies have applied economic, geographic, and tourism theories to road-tripping, few if any have examined this recreational activity in the context of leisure theory.

Unlike the phenomenon of self-drive recreation, the theory of serious leisure has been retested and refined in the literature for the past 25 years, and has been applied to the study of a wide range of recreational activities (Stebbins, 1982; 2001a; 2005). It seeks to classify and explain certain dedicated leisure pursuits that take on deeper meaning and identity for their participants and that become a career, or life purpose, of sorts (Stebbins, 1982). While serious leisure has come to be repeatedly supported in the literature (Stebbins, 2001a), its “discoverer” Stebbins has recently proposed a new addition to this theory that has yet to be tested. Dubbed “project-based” leisure, this branch of serious leisure theory seeks to explain and understand those activities that require involvement and dedication, in the same way as serious recreational pursuits, yet that do not develop into careers but are rather one-time or infrequent occurrences. These activities necessitate as much planning, resources, and commitment as serious leisure
activities, yet because they have a set end time and are thus not continuous pursuits, they cannot be classified as such. As no empirical research has yet been published on project-based leisure, it is not yet known what, if any, ability it might have to grow into serious leisure (Stebbins, 2005).

It is clear that there is a need for more research on self-drive recreation, especially from a leisure studies perspective, as well as a need for the study of project-based leisure. Fortunately, both areas appear to be ideally suited areas for mutual study. Participants in long-distance self-drive recreation, such as those who drive from the contiguous 48 states and southern Canada to Alaska, obviously require considerable planning for their trips to be successful. They are deeply involved with their activity for the duration of their trip; however, for many, this involvement ends when the trip is finished. Such deep involvement in self-drive recreation, coupled with a distinct ending point, seems to fit the concept of project-based leisure. Additionally, within the segment of long-distance road-trippers, there is a subset that has foregone permanent homes and instead has adopted a more nomadic lifestyle of fairly continuous travel (Russell & Russell, 2007). From casual observation, this subset appears to be participating in self-drive recreation as an incredibly involved example of serious leisure. Therefore, at least at first glance, it seems as though self-drive recreation provides an example of an activity that is undertaken as project-based leisure for some and as serious leisure for others. Both self-drive recreation and serious leisure can serve as a context for deepening the understanding of the other, as serious and project-based leisure theory can be applied to long-distance self-drive recreation to gain insights into the motivations of the participants, just as the dichotomy of perpetual and infrequent road-trippers can provide a context for understanding the
relationship between serious and project-based leisure. Thus, the aim of this study was to enhance the understanding of both self-drive recreation and project-based leisure by examining both in the framework of the other.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**SERIOUS LEISURE THEORY**

Serious leisure has been defined as “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist, or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (p. 17) by Stebbins (1997), who first proposed the theory in 1982. Stebbins sought to separate and examine those types of activities that, although they require considerable dedication, practice, skill, and time similar to occupations, careers, and work in general, they are in fact undertaken as leisure activities (1982). His theory of serious leisure was formulated after many years spent observing amateur performers, hobbyists, and career volunteers (1979; 1980; 1981).

In his proposal of this theory, Stebbins (1982) identified six elements that must be present in order for an activity to qualify as serious leisure. The first of these is that participants must persevere at their activity of choice; that is, they must overcome difficulties from time to time in the pursuit of their chosen serious recreational activity. As Stebbins describes it, serious leisure therefore is not pure fun or an “unalloyed joy,” (2001a; p. 55), but rather, its pursuit can sometimes be unpleasant or even arduous. However, the participants are dedicated enough that they do not give up in the face of adversity, and even gain a sense of accomplishment in overcoming it.
The second element of serious leisure is that there is the tendency for participants to develop careers in their chosen activities, whereby their “endeavors are enduring pursuits with their own histories and turning points, stages of achievement or involvement, and background continuity,” (Stebbins, 1982; p. 256). Recreationists in serious leisure create and build upon a history of their participation. They can look back at their past experiences and identify instances of significance and turning points that have affected subsequent participation.

Third, Stebbins (1982) stated that serious leisure requires personal effort based upon skill, knowledge, or training. There needs to be some form of learning that increases competency in the recreational activity, and the acquisition of skills or knowledge through this training often marks turning points in the previously mentioned career aspect of serious leisure. Skills and knowledge that are gained at one point in the leisure career are often employed at later points. In addition to Stebbins (1982), other researchers as well have noted that possessing skills, knowledge, and experience pertaining to an activity are related to long-term involvement in a recreational activity (Scott & Shafer, 2001).

Stebbins (1982) describes the fourth identifying characteristic of serious leisure as being that the activity must produce durable benefits for the participant. These benefits provide an impetus for participation. In his first proposal of the theory in 1982, Stebbins identified eight such benefits, based upon his earlier work with amateurs and hobbyists (1979; 1980; 1981): self-actualization, self-enrichment, recreation or renewal, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, self-expression, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity. Self-gratification, or “fun”,
can also result, though such a benefit is not unique to serious leisure. Further consideration by Stebbins and others over the two decades following his proposal of this element of serious leisure have indicated that not all of these eight benefits need be provided by an activity for it to still be classified as serious leisure. For instance, liberal arts enthusiasm, which is the “systematic and fervent pursuit during free time of knowledge for its own sake,” (Stebbins, 1994; p. 175) produces little or no lasting physical benefits, unlike, say, tying flies. Social interaction and belongingness may also be missing from such an activity and it can still be considered a serious leisure pastime, though participants in such activities will likely experience at least some small sense of belonging with other enthusiasts (Stebbins, 2001b). Additionally, Stebbins later mentioned several other benefits, including some with societal impacts, which can arise from serious leisure participation. He argues that there has been a post-industrial trend towards decreased work hours and increased unemployment, as noted by Rifkin (1995), Aronowitz and DiFazio (1994), and Howard (1995). In this situation, serious leisure can fill the void that devotion to work used to fill for many people. Participation in serious leisure activities can provide routine, lifestyle, identity, organization, and a new central life interest to those individuals who used to satisfy such requirements through employment (2001b).

The fifth characteristic of serious leisure is the unique ethos that develops around it because of the subcultures created by participants. Stebbins notes that through the acquisition of skills and knowledge, the following of a leisure career, and through the sharing of the benefits, different serious leisure activities encourage the formation of
social worlds amongst those with shared experiences and interests. This ethos also serves to reinforce some of the benefits of serious leisure, particularly those of social-interaction and belongingness, through the formation of social worlds created around serious recreational activities.

The sixth and final element indicated by Stebbins is that “participants in serious leisure tend to identify strongly with their chosen pursuits” (1982; p. 257). This element reflects some of the discussion about leisure commitment, particularly along the lines of centrality and ego-involvement. Centrality (Kim, Scott, & Crompton, 1997; Scott & Shafer, 2001; Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004), here referring to centrality in recreation, is the extent to which a person’s life is tied to a leisure activity. It pertains to what degree that activity is connected to the participant’s lifestyle, social networks, and identity. Ego-involvement (Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992) is how much an individual identifies him- or herself with an activity. Sometimes this ego-involvement can become so strong as to lead to centrality. Other times, it is possible that centrality can lead to ego-involvement, where “a person is internally committed to a leisure activity, role, or relationship when he or she sees it as expressing a valued asset of his or her identity,” (Shamir, 1988, p. 244).

Such participants with strong centrality and/or ego-involvement are excited and enthusiastic about their chosen activities, are often willing to share them with others, and may be more inclined to label themselves as participants in their activities than by their occupations or position in life (Stebbins, 1982).
In 1982, Stebbins identified three groups of recreationists who commonly participate in serious leisure. The first was amateurs, or those who pursue activities in the arts, science, or sport as a leisure activity, while other people may pursue those same activities professionally. The second is hobbyists, who engage in a “specialized pursuit beyond one’s occupation” (p. 260) and for whom there are usually no professional counterparts. He divides hobbyists further into four categories: collectors of things, makers and tinkers, activity participants, and players of sports and games (1982). In 1994, Stebbins also included liberal arts enthusiasts to this category, admitting that he had overlooked this group in his initial formulation of the theory. According to Stebbins (1982), the third group of serious leisure participants is career volunteers who dedicate their time to various causes and receive enjoyment from it.

In addition to the numerous benefits that serious leisure provides, Stebbins (1992) also explained that it has several costs. The first of these is disappointment, as occurs when participants fail to meet the goals they have set for themselves in their activity or when situations out of their control negatively affect their activity. The second cost is dislikes, which are negative perceptions about certain aspects of their activity. While participants may enjoy the activity in general, there are often particular aspects of it that they may find displeasing. Tension is the third cost mentioned by Stebbins, and it includes undesirable emotional states such as stage fright, fear, and over-eager anticipation that can come with participation in certain activities. Stebbins (2001a) later noted that conflict, such as with family members or due to constraints from responsibilities, can also be a cost of serious leisure. This fourth cost was acknowledged after Goff et al. (1997) examined spousal support for serious leisure activities. Tying
these costs back into the elements of serious leisure, Stebbins (1992) concluded that the costs of any serious leisure activity make up the “adversity” that participants must overcome through perseverance. While some serious leisure pursuits may seem to have sizeable costs for the recreationists, those participants arguably find that, according to the ideas set forth by Homans (1974), the benefits they experience must outweigh the costs. Thus, the “profit” of benefits encourages further participation despite the difficulties (Stebbins, 1992).

Casual Leisure

At the same time he proposed the theory of serious leisure, Stebbins also presented its foil, casual leisure, as a useful tool with which he could contrast serious leisure. Stebbins (1997) explained that casual leisure was an “immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it. In broad, colloquial terms, it could serve as the scientific term for the practice of doing what comes naturally,” (p. 18). It is comprised of all leisure not classifiable as amateur, hobbyist, or career volunteering (2001b). Such casual activities do not require perseverance, a career, training or skills, unique ethos, or identity, and the lasting benefits, if any, are different from those produced by serious leisure. Stebbins states that many more people participate in casual leisure than serious leisure, yet for many years it was treated as marginal in the study of serious leisure (2001a).
Much as he did with serious leisure in 1982, Stebbins examined and classified casual leisure in 1997. He identified six categories of casual leisure: play, relaxation, passive entertainment, active entertainment, sociable conversation, and sensory stimulation. He also acknowledged that these types are not mutually exclusive and can be combined in certain activities (2001a). All of these activities share the quality of being hedonic, or intrinsically pleasurable, and they usually can help relax and/or refresh their participants. Stebbins later explored the costs of casual leisure, as well as the benefits, which had been long overlooked in favor of the benefits of serious leisure. He stated that one benefit of casual leisure is creativity and discovery, or serendipity (1997). Participants may accidentally discover something enjoyable that they may have not known before (2001b). Such dabbling could possibly lead to the discovery of new recreational opportunities that could evolve into serious leisure (2005). A second benefit, which Stebbins attributes to Nahrstedt (2000) is “edutainment”, whereby participants gain knowledge and information through entertainment, such as by watching documentaries or reading magazines (2001a). A third benefit is regeneration or recreation. While this was also listed as a benefit of serious leisure, Stebbins proposes that it may actually be more effective coming from casual leisure as its serious counterpart can be intense and demanding. The fourth benefit is the development and maintenance of relationships, which again can also come from serious leisure. Finally, Stebbins claims that casual leisure can lead to improved well-being and quality of life, especially when combined with serious leisure, as it produces a mentally healthy and
well-balanced individual with what he describes as an “optimal leisure lifestyle: the pursuit of one or more substantial, absorbing leisure activities that together approach the person’s ideal of a fulfilling existence during free time” (2000; 2001a, p. 93).

While he noted its benefits, Stebbins has also identified some costs associated with an overindulgence of casual leisure. One of these is boredom, which most likely occurs when participants experience none of the benefits of casual leisure and thus become disinterested in both the amount and kinds available. Second, casual leisure is unlikely to produce a distinct leisure identity for most participants. The third possible cost, overindulgence in casual leisure, can leave little time for serious leisure and thus can deprive participants of that optimal leisure lifestyle (2001a). Finally, casual leisure, Stebbins claims, makes only a limited contribution to self and community, despite its mass popularity. Besides its considerable economic impact (1997), casual leisure has little benefit to society and it is unlikely to lead to much personal improvement as is serious leisure (2001a).

Other Research in Serious and Casual Leisure

While Stebbins has clearly led the way in the development and analysis of his own theory of serious leisure, numerous other researchers have heeded his frequent encouragements to examine the topic on their own. Many explored specific forms of leisure to determine if they could be considered serious pursuits, and usually this was accomplished by examining how certain activities met the criteria established by Stebbins for serious leisure. Focusing on a singular recreational pursuit in the study of serious leisure has proven to be a successful method of analyzing the theory. Specific activities
often have their own associated social worlds, as described by Stebbins (1982), and researchers have found that they can gain insight into the costs, motivations, social networks, identities, etc. by penetrating these social worlds. These studies have led to a strengthening of the serious leisure theory as evidence supporting it has been found across a spectrum of activities.

One of the studied activities is sports fandom, which has been examined as a serious leisure pursuit several times. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) were the first to compare fandom with the work of Stebbins (1992), concluding that dedicated fandom could be classified as a form of serious leisure. Jones (2000) examined British football (or “soccer”) fans of a team with a long losing record, with an interest in determining why these fans continued in their serious leisure pursuit of fandom when, from outward appearances, there was no benefit in their dedication to a dependably dismal team. According to Stebbins (1992), benefits in a serious leisure activity that outweigh the costs can explain why many people continue in activities that require perseverance. Jones argued that a corollary of this claim should be that if costs outweigh the benefits, then participants would be encouraged to discontinue their activities. Yet, fans of a losing team in England continued to be fans, even after facing the frustration of watching their team repeatedly get defeated, as well as receiving the added disgrace of ridicule from fans of other teams. Such a situation would seem to produce more costs than benefits. Jones, however, determined after close analysis that despite the negative feelings and frustration produced by such dedication to a losing team, other products such as belongingness, unrealistic optimism, and social identity serve as benefits that encourage perseverance (2000). Gibson et al. (2002), making no mention of the previous two
articles, examined American university football fandom in Florida and likewise argued that fandom, as opposed to the activity of merely watching a spectator sport, is indeed a serious leisure pursuit. This rectified the idea set forth by Stebbins (1982) that watching sports should be considered a casual leisure activity, as Stebbins did not take into account the sense of career, identity, perseverance, etc. that dedicated fans add to their enjoyment of spectator sports. While for some, watching sports is indeed casual, for many, it is quite serious (2002).

Tourism is another realm of recreation that has been examined under the model of serious leisure. Hall and Weiler (1992) first proposed that some forms of tourism, specifically special interest tourism, could be considered as a form of serious leisure if participants engaged in their travels according to the framework set forth by Stebbins (1982). That is to say, such special interest tourists were not merely traveling solely for entertainment, but that their travels took on more purpose than merely traveling for travelling’s sake. Stebbins (1996), soon after his inclusion of liberal arts enthusiasm as another type of hobbyist serious leisure (1994), proposed that cultural tourism—visiting museums, festivals, architecture, historic sites, etc.—is a form of serious leisure falling under that liberal arts category. Kane and Zink (2004) also examined tourism, specifically package adventure tours, and determined that such tours, since they last for only a defined period of time, are not serious leisure activities unto themselves. However, these tours can constitute markers in the serious leisure careers of participants.
In this specific case, serious kayakers were studied as they took a kayaking adventure tour of New Zealand. The authors determined that while the tour was not serious leisure in and of itself, the fact that it was undertaken by participants for whom kayaking was serious leisure gave the tour an aura of seriousness.

Pets and the relationships their owners have towards them has also been a fruitful field in spurring research on serious leisure. Baldwin and Norris (1999) found that serious participation in American Kennel Club activities can lead to strong personal identification with dog activities based in the companionship gained with the pets as well as other participants, and that the satisfaction gained from such identification can encourage intense involvement in activities. Gillespie et al. (2002) also examined American Kennel Club activities under the framework of serious leisure, specifically how intense commitment to these activities affects commitments from other aspects of life, such as family, work, and church. Sometimes, the boundaries between these social worlds can be bent or blurred by dedication to the serious leisure pursuit, which can result in the leisure activity ethos becoming the dominant culture for the participant, as opposed to the “real world” of the non-participants.

Even educational pursuits have been studied as a form of serious leisure. Jones and Symon (2001) have examined how lifelong learning can be classified as a serious leisure pursuit, and suggested that it should be encouraged as both a means of providing an activity that lies between the “importance” of work and the “triviality” of leisure and
as a means by which social capital could be improved by producing a more educated populace. This notion of lifelong learning is similar to Stebbins later inclusion of liberal arts enthusiasm as a fifth type of activity participation in the serious leisure spectrum (1994).

Focusing on a specific serious leisure activity has in some cases brought to light instances and situations that Stebbins’ numerous ponderings on the theory may have missed due to the plethora of possible leisure activities. For instance, Yoder (1997) found through the study of the activity of competitive fishing that support industries are a crucial element of some serious leisure activities. These support industries are those that provide supplies and logistics for a serious leisure activity, often for their own economic benefit. Without such support, the serious leisure activities could not exist, at least in their current form, because essential materials or services would not be available. This is especially true of “commodity-intensive” activities that require specific supplies and backing from suppliers who are often dedicated to serving the enthusiasts. Competitive bass fishing, with its dependency on fishing poles, lines, boats, and the establishment of tournaments, is one such activity (1997). In contrast, liberal-arts enthusiasm (Stebbins, 1994) may be seen as the opposite, as little support is needed and many of the supplies, such as books, filmed documentaries, museums, and historical sites, are likely produced with a more general public in mind, and not just for those people who are liberal arts buffs. Although Stebbins had addressed the importance of “outsiders” to serious leisure activities in his discussion of the serious leisure subset of amateur performers and their need for audiences of outsiders (1982), he did not consider it for the subset of serious activity participants.
Although numerous, these examples of the application of the theory of serious leisure to specific activities, and the subsequent development of a further understanding of the theory from such applications, are but a small sample of the myriad of studies that have been performed. Other research has focused on serious leisure in shuffle-boarding (Snyder, 1986); peace activism (Parker, 1987); runners (Yair, 1990; Goff et al., 1997); curling (Apostle, 1992); Australian bushwalking (Hamilton-Smith, 1993); bridge (Scott & Godbey, 1993); American Civil War re-enactors (Mittelstaedt, 1995); ice skating (McQuarrie & Jackson, 1996); volunteer firefighting (Benoit & Perkins, 1997); mushrooming (Fine, 1998); owning second homes in France (Chaplin, 1999); Sea Cadet Corps volunteering (Raisborough, 1999); and windsurfing (Wheaton, 2000). Together, this variety of literature on the theory shows that it has been vigorously tested and expanded, garnering respect amongst academics.

**Serious Leisure, Leisure Commitment, and Leisure Specialization**

Stebbins’ theory has much in common with the theory of leisure commitment, which Becker (1960) described as “consistent behavior that persists over time and that is in part characterized by the rejection of comparable alternative activities,” (Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992; p. 304). Kim, Scott, and Crompton (1997) offered an alternate but similar definition: “Those personal and behavioral mechanisms that bind individuals to consistent patterns of leisure behavior,” (p. 323). Buchanan (1985) stated that there are three elements to recreational commitment: “(1) a consistent devotion of time and energy to the activity, (2) the presence of side bets or investments in the activity such as knowledge acquisition, and (3) an affective attachment to the activity,” (Bloch, Black, &
Lichtenstein, 1989; p.189). Also central to this notion of leisure commitment is a resistance to change. This can be due to a desire to continue based on rewards, such as when participants continue at an activity because they enjoy the benefits of participation (Shamir, 1988; Yair, 1992). Resistance can also be caused by the costs associated with discontinuing participation. If a person has invested greatly in an activity to which they are committed, such as through investments in time and money spent on equipment and other costs, then they may stand to lose what they have invested in the activity if they were to stop it (Kim et al., 1997; Kyle et al., 2004). This is especially true for larger purchases, such as summer homes, boats, or recreational vehicles (Shamir, 1988). Participants may also stand to lose social connections if they discontinue participation (Jones, 2000).

Leisure commitment has been found to be closely linked to recreation specialization, which can be described as a progression in expertise in a recreational pursuit (Kuentzel & McDonald, 1992; McIntyre & Pigram, 1992; Scott and Shafer, 2001). This theory holds that people who are committed to an activity may become better and better at it, and this will lead to a progression of increasing proficiency and specificity. In other words, recreationists often become better at, and more involved with, their pursuits the longer that they are engaged in them. There is a continuum of increasing specialization, starting at a stage of broad interest and little experience, and progressing with increasing investment, skill development, and commitment to a level of
deep expertise (Kuentzel & McDonald, 1992). However, it is not always possible to
demark a precise beginning and end to these stages (Scott & Shafer, 2001), though there
can be important turning points in the leisure career that mark such progressions
(Stebbins, 1992; Scott & Shafer, 2001).

Serious leisure clearly has much in common with the theories of leisure
commitment and specialization. Both serious leisure and commitment describe strong
feelings of identity (Stebbins, 1982), centrality (Kim, Scott, & Crompton, 1997; Scott &
Shafer, 2001; Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004, and ego-involvement (Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992)
with a chosen activity. There are also shared notions of personal investment, social
interaction, and other benefits (Stebbins, 1982; Kim et al, 1997). The idea of a leisure
career is also strongly evident in the theory of specialization, as well as the notion of
markers or turning points in those careers (Kane & Zink, 2000; Scott & Shafer, 2001).
The acquisition of skills and knowledge is also an important facet of both serious leisure
and specialization (Stebbins, 1982; Scott & Shafer, 2001).

With so many shared characteristics, it seems acceptable to label serious leisure as
a part or type of leisure commitment—if indeed they are not actually one in the same—and
to propose that it could not exist without leisure specialization. However, an
exhaustive review of the literature does not turn up any other indication of this notion,
and both theories have evolved along their own lines of research fairly independently
from each other. While this particular study is focusing on serious leisure theory, it will
also incorporate ideas from both commitment and specialization theory, and treat them as
generally all part of the same larger theory.
Project-Based Leisure

In his initial conceptual statement of serious leisure in 1982 (p. 255), Stebbins stated,

> During the current exploratory stage of research on serious leisure, seriousness is most effectively examined as a dichotomous quality, with casual or unserious leisure as its opposite. Even today, nonetheless, there is evidence... to suggest that seriousness and casualness, as personal approaches to leisure, are merely the poles of a complicated dimension along which individuals may be ranked by their degrees of involvement in a particular activity. Hence, a more sophisticated, research-informed construct will likely abandon eventually this primitive categorical terminology for conveying continuousness.

Yet, for the first two decades of the discussion and research on this topic, Stebbins held all leisure as generally classifiable as either serious or casual leisure. The dichotomy prevailed, and no research was performed on instances where elements of both may in fact be present. Stebbins himself even seemingly moved away from considering anything more than a dichotomy, as his definition of casual leisure indicated it as being “defined residually as all leisure not classifiable as amateur, hobbyist, or career volunteering,” (2001b; p. 305). Four years later, however, Stebbins reversed this thinking when he proposed his new theory of “project-based leisure” (2005; p. 2), which he defined as

> a short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time. It requires considerable planning, effort, and sometimes skill or knowledge, but for all that is neither serious leisure nor intended to develop into such.

Stebbins gives examples of this as being special event volunteering, preparing for birthday or holiday celebrations, or building an ornamental stone wall in one’s back garden (2005), though a myriad of other examples could likely be found with reflection.

All such activities involve a high degree of involvement and dedication, and all are building up to a completion point such as the arrival of the holiday celebration or the final stone being laid in the backyard wall. Though they may be repeated in another year or so, or even stopped for a while and then resumed later, these activities are not continuous undertakings nor are intended to be so (2005).
This new theory thus combines elements of both serious and casual leisure, though Stebbins feels that it is much closer to the serious side. The main difference between serious leisure and project-based leisure is that project-based leisure is not a continuous undertaking, and thus it does not produce a sense of a leisure career nor is it intended to become a central life interest. Rather, it is comprised of one-time or short-lived pursuits, although they can be repeated. While this lack of a career-building continuity prevents project-based leisure activities from being classified as serious, they otherwise share many of the same characteristics. Project-based leisure pursuits still require a need to persevere, and some skill, knowledge, and/or effort are required. They also are not purely hedonic, as are casual leisure undertakings. Stebbins indicates that project-based leisure also creates a special identity in the participant as well as a social world, although this social world is often not as complicated as ones associated with serious leisure. The benefits associated with serious leisure, such as self-actualization and social interaction, can also be derived from its project-based counterpart, and these rewards likely encourage participation (2005). Although Stebbins does not mention it specifically in his 2005 article, there seems to be no reason why the costs that are associated with serious leisure would also not be connected to project-based leisure, although maybe to a lesser degree given the temporally discrete nature of the activity. Recreational specialization is also seemingly possible with project-based leisure, with a progression in expertise occurring over time. Such a progression does not specifically require continuous participation, but can occur with the “infrequent but intense encounters” (McIntyre & Pigram, 1992; p. 4) that seem to typify project-based leisure.
Stebbins (2005) believes that project-based leisure can be an important part of his “optimal leisure lifestyle” (2000). It can be used as an interstitial activity to fill in space between serious leisure and non-leisure obligations, much as casual leisure can. However project-based leisure is more substantive than casual leisure. Project-based leisure also can be ideally suited for people who do not have much time at their disposal to engage in serious leisure, such as those with heavy workloads or family obligations, but who still want to engage in some activity that they would find more fulfilling than mere casual leisure (2005).

To date, no published work has been performed on the theory of project-based leisure aside from Stebbins’ (2005) initial conceptual statement. Stebbins himself states that he has performed no studies involving data to support or dispute this theory, and that he based the theory on “non-systematic observations of leisure in everyday life” (2005; p. 2). He hopes that his article will stimulate future exploration of this new theory so as to add to the understanding of leisure interest, “My object in this article is to present a conceptual framework detailed enough to focus inquiry, but at the same time open-ended enough to permit and encourage effective and, I hope, extensive exploration,” (2005; p. 1).

**SELF-DRIVE RECREATION**

Self-drive recreation, or driving for pleasure, is one of the most popular outdoor leisure activities in the United States (President’s Commission on Americans Outdoors, 1987). Although the phenomenon of self-drive recreation has often been referred to as “drive tourism” or “self-drive tourism” in recent literature, such a term is not wholly
accurate for this activity. While self-drive recreation can certainly contain many of the elements of tourism, it also incorporates the additional activity of driving itself. This activity of driving a vehicle, which is doubtlessly engaging for its participants, is a crucial component of the activity as a whole. Participants are not only exposed to sights, sounds, and cultural experiences, but they are also actively navigating road networks and using reflexes to deal with obstacles such as traffic, weather, and other poor driving conditions. This active level of involvement goes beyond that found in cruise ships, tour buses, and other more passive forms of tourism travel. Referring to the activity as simply a form of tourism excludes this active participation, and is akin to referring to long-distance hiking or kayaking as “self-walk tourism” or “self-paddle tourism”. Tourism is often involved in self-drive recreation, and “road-tripping” is a common manifestation of this activity whereby participants drive to different destinations. However, tourism needs not always be present. A couple could go for a weekend of driving along their favorite familiar country roads purely for the thrill of the drive, and such self-drive recreation would largely exclude elements commonly associated with tourism, such as travelling far from home and seeing new sights.

Most recent authors have used the term “self-drive tourism” to describe what could more broadly be called “self-drive recreation”. Many definitions have been proposed to describe self-drive tourism, colloquially known in North America as “road trips”, and although there are variations, all contain basically the same core elements. Olsen (2002) defined the “drive market” as “those travelers who participate in ‘drive holidays’,” (p. 11), but did not then adequately define what a “drive holiday” was. Scott (2002) noted that “it is possible to define drive tourism as travel by car or bus more than
40 kilometers for tourist purposes. It may be subdivided into categories such as self-drive/own car or self-drive/rented car although no taxonomic structure has been accepted in the literature,” (pp. 81-82). Scott interestingly adds the seemingly arbitrary “40-kilometer” rule without any support for that number, and does not indicate whether or not the bus travel mentioned in the definition includes packaged tours. Prideaux et al. (2001) have another definition of self-drive recreation: “Tourism that centres on traveling from an origin point to a destination by car that is either privately owned or rented, and engaging in tourism-related activities during that journey,” (p. 211). The definition used by Tourism Queensland, as cited in Olsen (2002), adds a time element to this, stating that self-drive recreation occurred when people are “traveling away from home for at least one night, on holidays or visiting friends and relatives, in their own, a rented or borrowed vehicle, as the primary mode of transport,” (p. 18). While this is the most comprehensive definition found, it still leaves something to be desired as it leaves out any distance requirement. According to the Tourism Queensland definition, if a family were to drive down the street to spend the night with their relatives, this would qualify as drive recreation. It also does not take into consideration individuals who fly half-way around the world and then rent vehicles at their destinations. A couple from Amsterdam who fly to Las Vegas and then rent a recreational vehicle and drive it for 5,000 miles through the American Southwest might not be considered drive recreationists, as their primary mode of transportation, if distance were to be considered, would still be by airplane.
Without a suitable definition found in the sparse literature on the subject, the following working definition for this recreational activity is proposed: Self-drive recreation, or “road-tripping”, is the movement of people for recreational purposes in a vehicle driven by a member of their party for a distance that is sufficiently far enough away from their homes that travel to and from the destination or destinations cannot be completed in one day.

Although consensus on a definition of self-drive tourism has not been reached in the literature, other aspects have been generally agreed upon. One is that the self-drive market is extremely large, especially in some developed countries. Carson and Waller (2002) claim that 80% of all trips in Australia taken by Australians are instances of self-drive tourism. Olsen (2002) is slightly more conservative, stating that only about 70% of those trips, or 53 million holidays, are self-drive tourism, though up to 85% of the trips taken in rural areas are self-drive. Prideaux and Carson (2003) cite a 2000 Australian Bureau of Tourism Research survey that agrees with the 70% figure. Carson and Waller (2002) also mentioned that nearly 48% of international tourists to Australia will participate in self-drive tourism after reaching the island continent. A study by Destination Analysts, Inc. (2006) of 1,043 Americans who traveled for leisure in the past 12 months found that 88.3% of them traveled by automobile. Clearly, this is a considerable recreational and travel market.

Another element of self-drive recreation that appears to be readily agreed upon is that self-drive recreationists are by no means all the same: the quotes “Recent research into the drive tourism market has shown that drive tourists do not represent a homogenous group of people, although they do share some common characteristics,”
(Hardy 2003, p. 315) and “Within this broad definition of the drive market there are without doubt a number of different segments encapsulating a range of different holiday types,” Olsen (2002; p. 11) illustrate this conclusion. Prideaux et al. (2001), Pennington-Gray (2003), and Prideaux and Carson (2003) all agree. Prideaux and Carson (2003) cite an unpublished Tourism Queensland report by consultants Yann Campbell Hoare Wheeler that found three segments of the self-drive market based upon travel behavior: the “touring segment”, who stop where they please and see the route as the primary attraction, the “A to B with stops segment”, who break a home-to-destination journey with stops along the way, and the “A to B” segment who drive without stopping.

Participants in self-drive recreation can also be divided by their reasons for travel (Prideaux et al, 2001; Laws & Scott, 2003), demographics (Prideaux, 2002), lifestyle (Hardy, 2003), type of vehicle, length of time away from home, and accommodation preferences (Prideaux & Carson, 2003).

The third aspect of self-drive recreation over which there is agreement is that this mode is popular because it allows for independence. Citing unpublished reports from Tourism Queensland, Olsen (2002) discussed how self-drive recreation allows a sense of freedom and independence. Self-drivers may see themselves more as travelers than as tourists, and may seek “real” experiences as opposed to “touristy” ones. This freedom arises from the fact that self-drive recreation allows a greater control over speed of travel, greater control over itinerary, greater dispersal of tourism flows including away from major routes, higher freight capacity, and often greater comfort than other forms of transport (Carson & Waller, 2002). This translates into a lack of rigidity when compared to package tours, and self-drive tourists are not nearly as confined by geography,
timetables, or activities as are typical mass tourism travelers (Prideaux & Carson, 2003).
Whereas all, or most, tourist travel is believed to offer individuals a sense of freedom and self-determination that is missing in their everyday lives (Krippendorf, 1987), more independent modes, such as self-driving, may offer even greater opportunities for this freedom (Hyde & Lawson, 2003). These unique opportunities presented by drive recreation make it particularly attractive to individuals at certain times in their lives when freedom is most highly valued (Olsen, 2002), such as after graduation or retirement. To achieve such feelings of freedom, however, there are some constraints that self-drive recreationists may have to overcome. These can include economic conditions such as the price of fuel (Destination Analysts, Inc., 2006), disposable income (Olsen, 2002), other financial issues, health concerns, lack of time, and responsibilities at home (Prideaux, 2002).

Despite the apparent high popularity and participation rates, self-drive recreation has surprisingly been largely ignored in academic studies. While there are no solid statistics for the number of road trips taken annually, analysis of the American culture since the first decade of the 1900s shows that the automobile, and vacations by automobile, have been popular with the masses since the introduction of the Ford Model T in 1908, and even earlier amongst the elite (Hugill, 1985; Rothman, 1998). References to road trips are rife in American art and popular culture, with some the earliest and still most endearing being Nat “King” Cole’s 1946 recording of “Route 66” and Jack Kerouac’s 1951 novel On the Road. Arising at roughly the same time and paralleling automobile travel in its growth, the motion picture industry has long used the road trip as a narrative structure, and examples of popular movies based around this form abound.
Little Miss Sunshine, National Lampoon’s Vacation, Thelma and Louise, and the obviously titled Road Trip, as well as such iconic films as Lolita, Rain Man, and Easy Rider, all revolve around the concept of a self-drive recreation experience (Cohan & Hark, 1997; Laderman, 2002; Mills, 2006). Illustrating the popularity of this genre, there are ironically seemingly more academic works examining road trip movies (Cohan & Hark, 1997; Laderman, 2002; Mills, 2006) than there are ones that examine the road trip phenomenon itself.

Perhaps one reason for the surprising lack of research on self-drive recreation, especially prior to the last few years, was a notably mistaken assumption that devotees of self-drive recreation were unadventurous and not as interesting to study. Plog (1973; 1990), in his study of the different personality types of tourists, specifically flyers and non-flyers, suggested that there was a continuum of travelers moving between two poles. At one side were the “psychocentric” travelers who tend to be anxious, inhibited, unadventurous, and who prefer familiar destinations with commonplace activities, heavy tourist accommodations, and low activity levels. These are the tourists who, if from New York City, would prefer going to Coney Island or Atlantic City over traveling to Africa or Tibet (D. Pearce, 1995). On the other end are the “allocentrics”, who are self-confident and adventurous and who travel to non-touristy areas seeking novel experiences, immersion in different cultures, and activity (D. Pearce, 1995; Burns & Holden, 1995). Plog characterized psychocentrics as preferring destinations that they could drive to, while allocentrics would rather fly (1973). This stance on the self-drive market has been repeated several times in the literature (D. Pearce, 1995; Burns & Holden, 1995), and perhaps it has come to be a standard assumption.
While certainly some drive recreationists on long trips would fall into the psychocentric end of the continuum, relegating all to that end suggests an undue stereotyping by Plog. It seems inappropriate to classify automobile tourists who travel overland from Florida to Alaska as being less adventurous than those who would choose to fly the same route, especially when the road would offer more chances to experience the region and break out of the protective “tourist bubble” (Smith, 1977). This unfortunate lump classification of all self-drive participants as unadventurous and self-centered is more deeply illustrated in Rothman’s (1998) study of 20th-Century tourism in the American West. Rothman describes how at first, the automobile was the vehicle of the adventurous who wanted to brave dangerous roads to get away from the railroad tracks and see a West that few others were able to experience. Soon, however, with mass ownership of automobiles, he claims that the self-drive market morphed into psychocentrics who kept to well-traveled tourist routes and who demanded all the comforts of home while away on the road. While certainly a large portion of the market did follow this trend, this does not account for those drivers who never lost the adventurous spirit, such as the thousands who flocked to drive the newly-completed Alaska Highway when it was just 1,500 miles of dirt road (Wonders, 1994), as well as what doubtlessly must have been many more who wanted to make the trip but lacked the time or resources.

The need for more research specifically focused on self-driver has become apparent in the last few years. Walsh et al. noted the neglect in 1990, “Despite its obvious importance, driving for pleasure has received little or no attention in the travel research literature,” (p. 17). Carson and Waller, two of the editors of *Drive Tourism: Up*
the Wall and Around the Bend (2002), which may be the only book published of academic studies and essays on the topic, recognize this lack of research: “The need for a book on this topic is evident from a review of the recent literature… there is little discussion of drive tourism,” (2002; p. 1). Noel Scott, the third editor of the book, added that, “As a topic for research, the study of drive tourism is very loosely defined, is not theoretically structured and lacks methodological rigor,” (2002; p. 81). Prideaux and Carson (2003; p. 308) support this notion, “Until recently, researchers have paid relatively little attention to drive tourism research. This is surprising given the significance of the drive tourism sector in terms of its size, its popularity, the resources allocated to drive tourism infrastructure, and its impact on regional tourism.”

Much of the little research that has been conducted specifically on self-drive recreation and tourism has come out of and been focused on Australia. The collection of studies edited by Carson et al. (2002) specifically looks at the Australian self-drive market. Several examined marketing aspects of self-drivers and how tourism agencies may respond to them. Scott (2002) examined self-drive tourism under economic and marketing frameworks in an attempt to understand the market of self-drive tourists, while Derrett (2002) compared self-drive tourism to the special interest tourism market and Sproule (2002) proposed using cluster marketing to improve tourism development in Tasmania. Prideaux (2002) studied Australian seniors and Marles (2002) focused on eastern Australian caravan-park users, both of which are different segments of the self-drive market. The other major theme was the development of strategies to promote drive tourism along certain routes (Ware & Budge, 2002) or in Australian towns that had been bypassed by tourism (Kelly & Spark, 2002). Outside of Carson et al. (2002), Prideaux et
al. (2001) again looked at the senior drive tour market in Australia, and Taplin and Qiu (1997) examined a model of route choices using the context of Western Australia drive tourism. A few Australian studies have examined some American aspects of self-drive recreation. Hardy (2003), from the University of Tasmania, looked at the development of touring routes to encourage self-drive tourism, and used two routes in the United States for case studies. Laws and Scott (2003) proposed that dinosaur and fossil-themed destinations could attract road-trippers to rural parts of Queensland as well as the Western U.S. Even though this literature from Australia has included discussion of other continents, it often relies on the Australian market as a point of reference. The information gained in most of these works can be generalized and applied to self-drive recreation in any geographic context, but they still illustrate that most academic interest in this topic has been confined to Australia.

Few articles have focused exclusively on North American self-drive recreation, which is surprising given the greater extent, abundance, diversity, and quality, of the North American, and specifically the U.S., road system. No other nation has a larger or more developed highway system than the contiguous United States. Australia, which is roughly the same size, has a dramatically less developed road system (National Geographic Society, 2004), yet this is where much of this academic attention has been focused. One of the few American studies to focus specifically on the phenomenon of self-drive recreation was by Pennington-Gray (2003) who researched self-drive tourists in Florida who are visiting friends and relatives. Other American studies have included or mentioned the self-drive market, but these were aimed more at examining some other tourism topic, such as visitor center use (Stewart et al., 1993; Fesenmaier, 1994) or drive-
through travelers and unplanned attraction visits (Perdue 1986), and merely used the self-drive segment as a convenient context, and not as the focus of the study. Clearly, given this lack of published material and the obviously large scope of the self-drive recreation market in the United States, there is a need for more research on this topic in North America.

Although it has not yet been examined as such, self-drive recreation shows many of the elements of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982), especially for the full-time RV segment. Many of these elements are illustrated in the *Gypsy Journal* (Russell & Russell, 2007), a self-published newspaper/newsletter developed by and for RV owners who live full-time in their vehicles. This publication illustrates several serious leisure characteristics, such as a social world that is built around the activities of RV ownership and driving, a strong identification with the activity, specialized skills and knowledge, benefits, and even a sense of career. This sense of career in travelers is also discussed by P. Pearce (1993) as “Like a career at work, people may start at different levels, they are likely to change levels during their life-cycle and they can be prevented from moving by money, health, and other people,” (p. 125). With further study, more of the elements of serious leisure could be identified and empirically measured in self-drive recreation and it could come to be classified as such.

**Alaska and Northwestern Canada**

Central to this study of self-drive recreation was the selection of Alaska and far Northwestern Canada as a study site for the phenomenon. The researcher has been a resident of Alaska for 10 years and is intimately familiar with the geography, history, and
culture of the region, especially as it relates to self-drive recreation. Based upon a review of the qualities of this region, it was concluded that it would be an excellent laboratory in which to study self-drive recreation. As an earlier report studying Alaskan tourism noted, “Alaska offers a novel vacation destination since it is physically remote, distinct with respect to climate, and culturally different owing to its indigenous peoples and history” (Snepenger et al., 1990; p. 14). Few if any other destinations in North America, and possibly the world, are as attractive to road tourists as a trip through Northwestern Canada to Alaska is (Valencia, 2006). There are several reasons for this attraction, and all are related to the novelty of this region.

First and foremost in attracting tourists of all types to the North are the natural attractions of this region. There are massive glaciers, fjords, volcanoes, the highest mountains on the continent, extended summer daylight, and abundant wildlife that cannot be found anywhere else in North America. Additionally, there are also the endless open vistas of vast, undeveloped wilderness that can stretch for hundreds of miles. Second, Alaska and Northwestern Canada have a variety of popular attractions and destinations, and not just one or two prime ones with several lesser ones. This encourages travel throughout and across the region instead of merely to one or two areas, keeping with the observed pattern of multi-destination trips being popular for long-haul destinations (Opperman, 1995). Indeed, for many, the destination is the North itself, and not any particular attractions therein. While travelers may be planning to visit Denali National Park, Dawson City, and Skagway, it is more likely that these attractions are not the purpose of making the trip to Alaska, but rather highlights of the trip.
Third, Alaska and Northwestern Canada are not places that road trippers are likely to have merely stumbled upon previously, as travelers need to make a considerable effort to get there. Alaska is as far away from the centralized North American land travel routes as one can get and still be on the continent, and this is illustrated by the fact that it has the farthest northern, northwestern, and western points on the North American mainland highway system (DeLorme, 1992). For perspective of the distance away from the rest of the U.S., one need only consider that Anchorage is exactly as close to Tokyo as it is to New York City (LPS Aviation, 2005). Thus, Alaska is not an area that is traversed by car or truck on the way to another destination, but is most likely the destination. Even the Yukon and northern British Columbia, while slightly closer to the rest of North American development than Alaska, only have highways that lead ultimately to Alaska and then back, or else dead end at only small settlements or in the wilderness. They are not used except by those who wish to travel to this Alaska, as they are not “on the way” to anything else but that state. A recent Tourism British Columbia advertisement illustrates this understanding by encouraging drivers to “Make the journey as remarkable as the destination” and to “Experience British Columbia on your way to Alaska,” (Valencia, 2006, inside front cover), while containing descriptions of the sites that can be seen in British Columbia as travelers pass through it on their way north.

Another reason why travelers are not likely to have merely passed through this region is that an overland trip here also requires considerable dedication, planning, and expenditure on the part of travelers owing to its lying so far out of the normal travel routes. Anchorage is 1,975 miles from Edmonton, Alberta and 2,287 miles from Vancouver, British Columbia, which are the closest large cities to it (Valencia, 2006),
and even Vancouver and Edmonton are distant to much of the U.S. and even Canada. A trip to this region thus can be viewed as a sort of endurance event for many drivers, as it can take less time to drive from coast to coast in the United States than it does to go from Seattle to Anchorage. Many self-drive visitors bypass the long travel time to Alaska by first flying up and then renting vehicles in Anchorage or Fairbanks that they will use to tour the state. A much smaller group travels with their vehicles aboard the Alaska Marine Highway System ferries from Bellingham, Washington or Prince Rupert, British Columbia, exchanging several days of driving with several days of boat travel (Niziol, 2006).

A fourth reason why the North is popular with the self-drive market is that the nature of the roads in this region makes them an attraction unto themselves. Despite the vast size of Alaska, the Yukon, northern British Columbia, and western parts of the Northwest Territories—an area over four times the size of Texas (Valencia, 2006)—there are extremely few roads. Often there are only two possible routes between any two points, if that many, and the second choice is usually much longer or largely unpaved. There are practically no shortcuts and no side-roads, and thus route planning is extremely simple as choices are limited (See Figure 1.1).

Although all of the main routes are now paved, they can still be in disrepair and have stretches of gravel. Except around Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, there are no expressways, and steep hills, curves, and narrow roads are the norm. These roads are also often relatively desolate, have no billboards, and little if any development along them. They serve as pathways through the wilderness and offer drivers the opportunity to be surrounded by spectacular scenery for hundreds of miles in either direction (See
Figures 1.2 through 1.6). The nature of these roads therefore results in their being more challenging to drive and distinct from most highways in the rest of the continent, and thus making them potentially prized and fabled destinations unto themselves for self-drivers. This fascination extends back to the very construction of the highways, as Canadian authorities were shocked at the high demand for travel on the Alaska Highway following its opening to the general public in 1948 (Wonders, 1994).

Figure 1.1. Map illustrating all of the highways in Alaska and Northwestern Canada. The Yukon is roughly the size of Texas. Approximately a fifth of these highways are gravel. (Adapted from McPhee Publications, undated).
Figure 1.2. Alaska Highway between Watson Lake and Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory. (Photo by the author)

Figure 1.3. Stone sheep blocking the Alaska Highway in Muncho Lake Provincial Park, British Columbia. (Photo by the author)
Figure 1.4. Dalton Highway in the Brooks Range, Alaska. (Photo by the author)

Figure 1.5. Construction that has removed the paved surface of the Alaska Highway for miles along Kluane Lake in the Yukon. Advertisements claimed the Alaska Highway was entirely paved (Alaska Travel Industry Association, 2007). (Photo by the author)
Figure 1.6. National Park Service warning sign on the gravel Edgarton Highway in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park between Chitina and McCarthy/Kennicott, Alaska. (Photo by the author)

Figure 1.7. Rental car at the Arctic Circle, Dalton Highway, Alaska illustrating conditions on secondary roads in the state. (Photo by the author)
The uniqueness of the highways and their attraction to drivers is recognized both by locals and visitors to this region. Although the routes all have designated numbers, they also all have proper names that are used instead by the locals, as if to emphasize the individual character of each road. “Alaska Highway”, “Richardson Highway”, and “Tok Cut-Off” are much preferred over “Route 2”, “Route 4”, and “Route 1”. Many Alaskans do not even know the route numbers of the highways, and tourists can be readily identified when they use such numbers in referring to the roads. Additionally, unlike anywhere else in North America, there exists a comprehensive mile-by-mile guidebook for all these roads. *The Milepost*, which has been updated annually since 1949 (Valencia, 2006) soon after the Alaska Highway was first opened to civilian travel, describes nearly every road in Alaska, the Yukon, northern British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories down to the tenth of a mile, as well as providing descriptions of even the smallest villages and the services they offer to travelers. While the relative dearth of roads in the region certainly aids in allowing for such a complete and thorough description of every route, *The Milepost* still contains 800 full-size pages (Valencia, 2006). Clearly, the yearly updating, detail, and uniqueness of this guidebook indicates that a market exists for self-drive recreation in Alaska and Northwestern Canada that is not found elsewhere.

Owing to the novelty, popularity, and adventure that Alaska and Northwestern Canada offer for self-drive recreation, this region is an extremely popular destination in North America, and perhaps even the most desirable. However, the cost and time needed to reach this area may act to limit visitation, as though it receives nearly 125,000 self-drive long-haul tourists (Niziol, 2006), it does not attract nearly as many as other
destinations such as Florida, at 40.9 million non-air arrivals in 2005 (VisitFlorida, 2006). Far more people opt to come to Alaska as cruise ship tourists, which number nearly one million (Niziol, 2006), than as drivers. The limitations that make road travel to this region more difficult and that discourage many may at the same time enhance its novelty and desire for others. As it is typically not a trip that many self-drive participants repeat often, if at all, it garners a certain prestige and value above other trips. For many in the self-drive market, it may be considered the “trip of a lifetime”. Indeed, the Alaska Travel Industry Association has adopted several marketing slogans that capitalize on this notion that theirs is a unique and desired destination. One, released in 2005 and obviously aimed at the self-drive market as it is shown imposed on the template of an Alaskan license plate, reads “B4UDIE”, a play on “before you die” (Alaska Travel Industry Association, 2005). This promotes the idea that Alaska is such a remarkable destination that it should be visited at least once, despite its difficulties, in order to make the life of a self-drive devotee complete.

Thus, the draw created by the novelty, relative difficulty, and prestige of a road trip to this region makes Alaska and Northwest Canada a prime location in the study of self-drive recreation. If self-drive recreation is to be viewed as a form of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982), as this study aims to accomplish, and if particular trips can be viewed as career markers in serious leisure careers, as Kane and Zink (2004) contend, then perhaps an expedition to Alaska and Northwest Canada would serve to be a highpoint in the career of the participant. It would also stand to reason that the amount of effort and planning essential to a self-drive trip to Alaska would indicate that it is certainly not by
any means casual leisure (Stebbins, 2001a). Yet for those who partake in such a trip but who do not regularly undertake road-trips as a serious leisure pursuit, a trip to Alaska and Northwest Canada would constitute an example of project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2005).

**STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research study was to explore several aspects of leisure theory using the context of participants in self-drive recreation, as well as also to examine self-drive recreation with leisure theories. First, this study examined the new theory of project-based leisure and sought to determine what role and to what degree, if any, the undertaking of a project-based leisure pursuit (i.e. self-drive tourism) may have in the formation of a serious leisure career. Stebbins (2005), in his introduction to the theory of project-based leisure, noted that there may be some connection between this temporally discrete form of leisure and a more indefinite career in serious leisure:

> Perhaps it happens at times that, even if not intended at the moment as participation in a type of serious leisure, the skilled, artistic, or intellectual aspects of the project prove so attractive that the participant decides, after the fact, to make a leisure career of their pursuit as a hobby or an amateur activity… (p. 3).

> … I mentioned in passing that some people may, as a result of undertaking their leisure project, discover that it or part of it is highly fulfilling and that they would therefore like to continue with it as serious leisure. What precipitates such change in orientation? Although this is ultimately a question for research, I suspect that the individual finds in the project hidden talents…(p. 10).

This study sought to determine what factors, motivations, and conditions may lead to the adoption of a project-based leisure undertaking as a serious one, specifically in the area of self-drive recreation.
Second, this study aimed to classify self-drive “road-tripping” tourism as a serious leisure undertaking for some of its participants, and as a project-based leisure undertaking for others. As the first aim of this study was to explore the relationship between these two of Stebbins’ classifications of leisure, and that this study proposed to do this through research performed on self-drive recreation, then self-drive recreation needed to be first examined as a form of serious and/or project-based leisure. Stebbins’ (2001a; 2005) criteria were applied to those who undertake this activity to determine if any of them exhibit the signs commensurate with serious leisure participation. As illustrated in the literature review, numerous other studies have applied this method to a variety of other leisure activities (Yoder, 1997; Baldwin & Norris, 1999; Jones 2000; etc.). At the same time, and unlike any previously published reports, this study attempted to determine if those participants in self-drive recreation for whom the activity cannot be classified as serious leisure may in fact be participating in it as a project-based leisure activity. This could make “road-tripping” the first activity to be empirically-supported as possibly falling under the category of project-based leisure for some of its participants. Given the relatively large amount of planning required for the undertaking of a self-drive recreation trip, it is not expected that the activity could be classifiable as casual leisure (Stebbins, 2001a).

Third, this study sought to determine if quantitative methods would be applicable to the identification of serious and project-based leisure. Despite the myriad of studies performed on serious leisure theory, not one has attempted to determine quantitatively if an activity was indeed being undertaken as such. The preference for qualitative research in this field goes back to its origin, and such methods have certainly proven appropriate
and successful (Stebbins, 1982; 2001). Stebbins has explained that qualitative exploration allows researchers to enter the everyday world of their subjects and get the most detailed answers possible (1992). Yoder (1997) noted that qualitative methods such as participant observation have been argued for by past researchers for use in leisure study based upon the grounds that such subjective methods are in line with the subjective nature of much of leisure. Though studies have employed quantitative means to examine aspects related to serious leisure (Yair, 1992; Hastings et al., 1995), none have utilized such methods to examine serious leisure itself. None of the studies have stated reasons why quantitative methods may not be suitable for the study of this theory, but only explained why particular researchers preferred to use qualitative ones.

**Research Questions**

Related to the stated research purposes of this study, the specific research questions are:

1. Can segments of the self-drive recreation market to Alaska be classified as enthusiasts in a form of serious leisure?
2. Can the remaining segments of the self-drive recreation market be classified as undertaking project-based leisure?
3. What are the differences between those who undertake road-tripping seriously from those who pursue it as project-based leisure?
4. Can a project-based leisure road trip be a marker in what may evolve into a serious leisure career?
5. What factors, motivations, and conditions may lead to the adoption of a project-based leisure undertaking as a serious one, specifically in the area of self-drive recreation?

6. Can serious leisure devotion and/or project-based leisure devotion to a recreational activity be determined from quantitative data analysis?

**Hypotheses**

H1. Self-drive recreation can be classified as falling under either serious or project-based leisure. Numerous other studies have found that a wide range of activities can be undertaken as serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982; 2001a), and evidence in publications indicates that for some, self-drive tourism shares at least some of those characteristics (Russell & Russell, 2007).

H2. The differences between those who undertake self-drive recreation as serious leisure and those who pursue it as project-based leisure will be related to different amounts of resources such as time and money, constraints from obligations such as family and work, and additionally identity with the activity. Serious leisure road trippers will have more resources and fewer obligations.

These related hypotheses are formulated from Stebbins (2005) and supported by Pearce (1993) as well as a study of travel constraints for seniors in Australia performed by AC Nielsen (1998) and discussed in Prideaux (2002). Additionally, H2 was developed from studies on leisure constraints (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993).
H3. Enjoyment of the self-drive recreation experience will be a primary motivation in stimulating the desire for adoption of the project-based leisure activity as a serious one.

H4. Acquiring greater resources such as time and money and reducing obligations and leisure constraints such as work and family will be the principal factors that allow the adoption of project-based leisure to develop into serious leisure.

These related hypotheses are derived from Stebbins (2005) initial explanation of project-based leisure and his ponderings on the differences between project-based and serious leisure, and literature on leisure constraints was also consulted for H4 (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991).

H5. Previous self-drive recreation trips undertaken as project-based leisure will serve as landmarks in the leisure careers of those who now enjoy the activity as a serious leisure pursuit.

This hypothesis is based upon Stebbins (1982) and his notions of a “leisure career” being an essential part of serious leisure participation, and Kane and Zink (2004), who found evidence to support the idea that single trips can serve as markers in such careers.
H6. Both serious and project-based leisure devotion to a recreational activity can be determined from quantitative data analysis.

Though some studies have employed quantitative means to examine aspects related to serious leisure (Yair, 1992; Hastings et al., 1995), none have used such methods to examine serious leisure itself. No studies, however, have stated reasons why quantitative methods may not be suitable for the study of this theory, but only explained why particular researchers preferred to use qualitative ones. Structural equation modeling (Byrne, 2001) has been shown to be applicable in similar studies, especially since the relationship of the elements that Stebbins (1982) proposed combine into serious leisure can easily be represented by a simple model.

**BROADER IMPACT OF RESEARCH**

This research has the potential to benefit both the understanding of leisure theory as well as provide insights into self-drive recreation that may be useful to tourism marketers and service providers. Evidence of self-drive recreation being a form of project-based leisure will lend support to that new theory, and an understanding of the relationship between project-based and serious leisure will address a gap in those theories and provide empirical data useful in the support of them. A study of the usefulness of quantitative means to the study of serious leisure would also serve several purposes. First, purely for the sake of inquiry, it would demonstrate that such methods can or cannot be employed. Second, such a study could make the theory of serious leisure more acceptable to those who may still harbor doubts about the validity of subjective
qualitative methods. Third, a demonstration of quantitative methods in this area could pave the way for future quantitative or mixed-methods studies. Qualitative methods often compensate for their depth of detail with small study populations, while quantitative methods would allow for far larger sample sizes (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007), and could examine patterns and deviations within those populations that may not be apparent on a smaller scale or that would require an overwhelming amount of work if solely quantitative means were to be employed.

Furthermore, information that was gleaned about self-drive recreation from this study may be useful for marketers, especially in the region of Alaska and Northwestern Canada where tourism is a vitally important sector of local economies. Tourism accounts for at least 5% of the GDP and at least 8% of the employment of the Yukon, making it the single largest component of the GDP (Government of Yukon, 2004). Alaska’s total tourism market is now over 1.5 million visitors each year, which is about twice the entire population of the state, and tourists spend nearly $2 billion there. Self-drive recreation account for at least 125,000 of these visitors, and many more fly to the state and then rent cars to travel about during their stay (Niziol, 2006). These road tourists are disproportionately important to the economies of the small towns that are located along highways and not included on the more popular cruise ship itineraries. A better understanding of their relatively small but vitally important tourists could enable promoters and providers in this area to more effectively provide for the visitors and maximize their economic benefits.
METHODS

The researcher had extensive knowledge both as a participant and as an observer of the self-drive recreation market in Alaska in Northwestern Canada that informed his design of this study and its implementation. Having been a resident of Fairbanks, Alaska for 10 years, he observed and worked with the annual tourist migrations and became intimately familiar with the varieties of tourists and their preferences. After acquiring an all-wheel drive station wagon, he had spent the last 8 years participating in self-drive recreation, having driven from the East Coast of the U.S. to Alaska and back three times. He has intimate knowledge of the geography and history of nearly all the non-urban roadways in Alaska, having driven every highway and wilderness road in mainland Alaska not requiring dedicated four-wheel drive at least once (and often repeatedly), including the Dalton Highway to the Arctic Ocean, as well as most of the roads in the Yukon and northern British Columbia. Also, his knowledge of this tourism market, and the larger Northern recreation industry, has been informed by professional and personal relationships with representatives of the Alaska State Parks, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, U.S. Border Patrol, Environment Yukon, and the city governments of Juneau, Anchorage, and Whitehorse. This extensive knowledge and experience, fueled by a personal passion for the activity of driving, the character of the roads in this region, and the land itself, allowed for the crafting of a study that could target and find self-drive tourists and contain survey items designed to illicit information about leisure attachment as it relates to self-drive recreation.
This research consisted of a non-experimental survey research design utilizing mixed data collection and analysis methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This study followed the explanatory design model whereby qualitative data was used to explain or build upon quantitative results (Creswell et al., 2003). Surveys consisting of quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions were distributed in the field to recreationists, and these were supplemented by in-depth open-ended qualitative interviews that allowed for a deeper understanding of the quantitative data as well as helped to triangulate the findings from both methods used in the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

**Population and Sampling**

The target population of this study was self-drive recreationists in Alaska and the Yukon Territory, including those who flew to the region and then rented vehicles. This population was sampled and interviewed in the field during the middle of the summer tourist season of 2007, which ran from roughly mid-May through mid-September. The rest of the year sees a dramatic drop in tourists, as can be expected in the face of strong winter weather and greatly diminished daylight. The main body of Alaska experienced generally good weather in the summer of 2007, with many warmer days and no extensive periods of rain. Forest fires were not nearly as much of an issue as they had been in past years, and most areas were free of smoke. Gas prices in the more developed areas of Alaska were at or below national averages for most of the summer, with the average price of a gallon of unleaded costing about $3.00 to $3.10. More remote areas saw higher gasoline prices, with Haines and Prudhoe Bay selling it at $3.69. The highest price of gas found along the highway system was $3.89 per gallon at Coldfoot, which is an isolated
village on the Dalton Highway far above the Arctic Circle and hundreds of miles from the next gas stations, so travelers have no choice but to buy fuel to there continue north or south. The Yukon and Northern British Columbia had higher prices, with the average being about $5 to $5.50 per gallon after conversions are made from Canadian dollars per liter. The Alaska Department of Commerce reported that the Alaskan/Canadian border saw 194,200 people leave Alaska during the summer of 2007, representing a minor decrease of 2.6% over the previous year. Ferry exits were down 6.3%, but air exits increased by 2.2% and cruise ship traffic increased 9.2% (McDowell Group, 2007).

Potential respondents were identified as self-drive recreationists using several criteria. First, respondents were searched for in campgrounds frequented by self-drive tourists. Only those campers who were in or near vehicles were considered. Those vehicles were observed for type, such as RV or camper vans, as well as for out-of-region license plates. Rental vehicles are often easily identified by casual Alaskan observers owing to the fact that they are often overly clean by Alaskan standards, may have temporary license plates or rental agency decals, and—most notably—they are often of makes and models, such as Chrysler PT Cruisers, Toyota Echos, Chevrolet HHRs and Cobalts, Dodge Calibers, all varieties of Hyundais, and several others, that are not generally popular with residents of the state and therefore rarely seen outside of the commercial rental fleets. Potential respondents were also verbally queried to determine if they were indeed participating in road recreation.
It was not anticipated that there would be difficulty in soliciting interviews, as the researcher’s past experience in working with the USDA Forest Service in similar interviewing situations had indicated that people in recreational settings are usually willing to answer questions about the activities in which they are participating. Further personal experience has shown that tourists driving to this region are often highly excited about their trips and are more than willing to discuss them.

All potential self-drive recreationists that could be found at each site were approached and asked if they would like to participate. Those who agreed, and for whom reading an extensive survey and/or responding to an interview in English was not a difficulty, comprised the sample for this study.

**Location**

This study was conducted at public campgrounds and RV parks throughout Alaska and the Yukon Territory. Study sites were chosen from a convenience sample of all locations where permission could be obtained to administer the surveys, and then were visited on randomly selected dates. These random dates were selected by assigning a number to each of the five approved campgrounds in Alaska and assigning a number to each of the 20 possible survey dates. An online random-number generator (Random.org, 2007) was then used to create four random sequences of the five campgrounds and one of the 20 possible survey dates. The possible survey dates were determined by the time available to travel to Alaska and survey around the middle of the tourist season (June 1st to August 15th, 2007), with a one-day space between each survey day to allow for travel from one site to another. These two sequences were then paired so that each randomly
selected date was matched with a randomly selected campground. Five campgrounds in the Yukon Territory, as well as campgrounds in the Haines, Alaska area, were surveyed both on the way into and on the way out of Alaska in a geographically linear sampling that matched travel up and down the Alaska highway and that was not randomly selected. I.e., campgrounds were sampled south-to-north as the surveyor drove north to Alaska, and the north-to-south as he drove back south. This was done to avoid the considerable time and fuel costs of including this much larger and far less concentrated region in the regular sample. The dates of travel through this region were dictated solely by the days available to survey in Alaska, and were strictly independent of all other influences such as days of the week, holidays, weather, distances, gas prices, etc. In all, only 21 surveys, or about 9% of the total, were collected from the Yukon and Haines, and they were not found to be significantly different than surveys from the main body of Alaska. The sampling schedule is presented in Table 1.1.
Table 1.1. Sampling schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (2007)</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Campground</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. Interviews</th>
<th>No. Surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. June 14</td>
<td>Thur</td>
<td>Watson Lake YT*</td>
<td>Watson Lake, Yukon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. June 15</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Johnson Lake YT</td>
<td>Faro, Yukon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. June 16</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Pioneer RV Park</td>
<td>Whitehorse, Yukon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. June 17</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Wolf Creek YT</td>
<td>Whitehorse, Yukon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. June 20</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Haines State Parks</td>
<td>Haines, Alaska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. June 21</td>
<td>Thur</td>
<td>Haines State Parks</td>
<td>Haines, Alaska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. June 22</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Snag Creek YT</td>
<td>Beaver Creek, Yukon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. June 24</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Riley Creek Campground</td>
<td>Denali National Park</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. June 26</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Chena River Wayside SP**</td>
<td>Fairbanks, Alaska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. June 28</td>
<td>Thur</td>
<td>Eagle River SP</td>
<td>Anchorage, Alaska</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. June 30</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Centennial Campground</td>
<td>Soldotna, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. July 2</td>
<td>Mon</td>
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<td>Valdez, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. July 4</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Eagle River SP</td>
<td>Anchorage, Alaska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. July 6</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Riley Creek Campground</td>
<td>Denali National Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. July 8</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Centennial Campground</td>
<td>Soldotna, Alaska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. July 10</td>
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<td>Valdez, Alaska</td>
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</tr>
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<td>17. July 12</td>
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<td>Chena River Wayside SP</td>
<td>Fairbanks, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. July 14</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Chena River Wayside SP</td>
<td>Fairbanks, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. July 16</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Centennial Campground</td>
<td>Soldotna, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. July 18</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Eagle River SP</td>
<td>Anchorage, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. July 20</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Blueberry Lake SP</td>
<td>Valdez, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. July 22</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Riley Creek Campground</td>
<td>Denali National Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. July 24</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Centennial Campground</td>
<td>Soldotna, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. July 26</td>
<td>Thur</td>
<td>Blueberry Lake SP</td>
<td>Valdez, Alaska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. July 28</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Eagle River SP</td>
<td>Anchorage, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. July 30</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Chena River Wayside SP</td>
<td>Fairbanks, Alaska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Aug 1</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Riley Creek Campground</td>
<td>Denali National Park</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Aug 3</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Haines State Parks</td>
<td>Haines, Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Aug 5</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Wolf Creek YT</td>
<td>Whitehorse, Yukon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Aug 6</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Pioneer RV Park</td>
<td>Whitehorse, Yukon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Yukon Territorial
** Alaska State Park
Campgrounds and RV parks were chosen as locations for surveying for several reasons. First, personal experience of the author in conducting similar recreational studies has shown that people engaged in traveling are most likely to be willing to discuss their experiences when they have settled down for the evening and are eating or relaxing. Similar studies of self-drive recreation in remote regions have reached the same conclusions (Lane & Waitt, 2007). The extended summer sunlight of this region also made conducting the interview outdoors in the evening much easier. Second, campgrounds provided easy identification of self-drive recreationists as they would be found near their vehicles, and the open nature of campgrounds made approaching such tourists far easier. Finally, despite the vast size of this region, campgrounds and RV parks are few and far between, especially outside of the few urban areas. Thus, their locations are often well known through publications such as The Milepost (Valencia, 2006) and they serve as magnets to the travelers in particular parts of the region who are inclined to stay at campgrounds.

Specific Alaskan campgrounds surveyed in this study included the Riley Creek campground at Denali National Park, the Centennial city campground in Soldotna, the Chena River Wayside State Park in Fairbanks, Blueberry Lakes state campground near Valdez, various small state campgrounds in and around Haines, and the Eagle River state campground north of Anchorage. Surveys were also made in the Yukon Territory at the Whitehorse city campground, Faro city campground, and Watson Lake, Snag Junction, and Wolf Creek territorial campgrounds.
Quantitative Survey

The quantitative portion of this study consisted of a survey form that was completed by the respondents in the field. It was administered at campgrounds throughout the region and contained an introductory paragraph explaining the study, and then sets of simple multiple-choice and fill-in questions designed to gather demographic and trip information, such as length, vehicle type, routes and destinations chosen, and reasons for coming to Alaska. These questions were based upon observations made over several years by the author as he participated in self-drive recreation in the region, and this was further supported by information in the exhaustive *The Milepost* travel guide to Alaska and Northwest Canada (Valencia, 2006). There was also a section of questions aimed at eliciting information about the respondents’ road tripping history, e.g. frequency of their trips, when they took their first trip, how often they have come to Alaska, and what factors may have been obstacles to trips in the past. These questions were devised based upon Stebbins’ (2005) introduction to project-based leisure, as well as literature on recreation specialization that discussed frequency and intensity of participation, and the possible cessation of participation, in relation to commitment and expertise in a chosen activity (Kuentzel & McDonald, 1992; McIntyre & Pigram, 1992; Scott & Shafer, 2001). Finally, a series of Likert-type scales were included where the travelers were asked to rate motivation and preference items on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 8 (extremely important). Most of these items were crafted to record levels of agreement with Stebbins’ (1982) six elements of serious leisure. They are presented organized by element in Table 1.2. These scales were then later to be subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (Byrne, 2001). Several others were designed to examine leisure constraints and
enjoyment. The remaining Likert-type scales were devised to capture information more specific to tourism in the North and were again based on observations and The Milepost (Valencia, 2006), as well as to address a side study examining the affects of increased security (e.g. passport) requirements at the Alaska/Canada border.

Although the suggested minimum number of samples required for a factor analysis varies widely in the literature, it is often cited that an absolute sample size larger than 100 is suitable (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988), and it was estimated that such a number could be easily reached during the study season. The entire survey instrument is presented in the Appendix.
Table 1.2. Breakdown of Likert-type survey items by serious leisure element (Stebbins, 1982).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serious Leisure Element</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perseverance</strong></td>
<td>Goff, et al. (1997); Jones (2000); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping sometimes has obstacles that I must overcome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping is not always entirely fun, but in general it is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping can be difficult at times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping makes me feel exhausted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of road tripping outweigh any costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family emotionally supports my travels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of career</strong></td>
<td>Kane &amp; Zink (2004); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see my road trip history as a series of victories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each trip I take is like an accomplishment in a series to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am growing more attracted to this activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effort based on skill, knowledge, or training</strong></td>
<td>Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have grown in the knowledge and skills I use on my trips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping can be done by anyone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping requires certain know-how and skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I associate with other travelers when I am on the road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a network of friends who travel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping makes me feel better about myself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping makes me feel refreshed or renewed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping makes me feel productive or accomplished</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping makes me feel like I am doing something important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping makes me feel like part of a group or community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of road tripping outweigh any costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique ethos</strong></td>
<td>Baldwin and Norris (1999); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to travel with a group or caravan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road trippers have their own little society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-road trippers have a hard time understanding me and my road trips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All road-trippers share at least some common elements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification with chosen pursuit</strong></td>
<td>Kim et al. (1997); Siegenthaler and Lam (1992); Stebbins (1982, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking road trips is my favorite activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to think of self as road tripper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I identify with other road travelers I see on the road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I almost feel compelled to take road trips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The idea of a life on the road appeals to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I associate more with taking trips than I do with my career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Interview

In addition to the quantitative component, this study also implemented a qualitative one. This consisted of a structured interview of open-ended questions designed to collect more in-depth information about the self-drive history, feelings, motivations, and desires of the interviewees. The interview format was of a modified grounded-theory format because that is considered to be the most appropriate qualitative method to generate new theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), such as the possible relationship between project-based and serious leisure. Interviews were conducted along with the quantitative surveys so that demographic and other data were available for each respondent, and also so that it could later be determined how they fit in amongst the other interviewees. Qualitative analysis has long been popular with the study of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992; Yoder, 1997; Jones, 2000; Kane & Zink, 2004) and has proven to be a successful method. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and then uploaded onto a laptop computer for subsequent transcription and analysis.

The interviews consisted of open-ended questions, and thus differed from a true grounded theory study in that there was much more investigator-imposed structure. While such a format has been criticized by some as not being as strong as a true formless qualitative interview study (Weiss, 1994), such criticism assumes that the interview format will be seeking very particular responses that will fit into pre-determined statistical analyses. In this case, the questions were simply designed as guides to create structure and to elicit information on specific topics, as well as to facilitate the collection of numerous interviews in a short time. Responses were treated as qualitative data, and not manipulated into statistical analysis, as such analysis will already have been
performed in the quantitative component of the study. The open-ended questions were
designed to delve deeper into the thoughts and feelings of participants in self-drive
recreation to provide richer data and to get at information that may have been overlooked
by the quantitative instrument. Even qualitative interviewing purists who may criticize
this method acknowledge that it has the advantage of imposing data coding earlier into
the process and that this facilitates analysis (Weiss, 1994). The interview questions and
the constructs they were designed to measure are presented in Table 1.3. Interviews were
conducted until saturation of information was reached (Creswell, 1998). It was
anticipated that far more than the 24 interviews considered sufficient to reach saturation
could be recorded within the timeframe of this field work.

As one aim of the study was to interview a variety of travelers, the researcher
followed a regimen of theoretical sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) by trying to select
subjects who show the most variation from those that have already been interviewed.
Such variation was based upon the type of vehicle, e.g. RV, camper van, car, truck,
motorcycle, etc., and its condition, e.g. new or old, clean or muddy, privately owned or
from a rental agency, as well as visible demographic differences as in age, gender,
nationality, race, license plate state or province of origin, and outward signs of socio-
economic status. The goal of this sampling method was to get fairly equal numbers of
interviews from a range of different types of travelers so as to cover the spectrum of road
trippers in this region.
Table 1.3. Guiding questions for qualitative self-drive recreationist interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Goff, et al. (1997); Jones (2000); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you choose to drive to/through Alaska?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you like to travel independently by car/RV?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you take trips like this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does road traveling make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Road trip history</strong></td>
<td>Kane &amp; Zink (2004); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you first come to enjoy traveling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were your early trips like?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where have you gone?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you get there? Where do you stay?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you take road trips?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe your typical traveling pattern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What investments or lifestyle changes have you made for this activity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constraints</strong></td>
<td>Jones (2000); Stebbins (1982, 1992, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would these difficulties ever be enough to keep you from traveling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would ever stop you from traveling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does road traveling make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you ever want to travel full-time, or at least for a larger part of the year? If so, why aren’t you doing it now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What conditions would need to be met for you to do so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perseverance</strong></td>
<td>Baldwin and Norris (1999); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does road traveling make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the trips completely fun for you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there some difficulties along the way?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What might these be? How do you feel after overcoming them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of Career</strong></td>
<td>Kim et al. (1997); Siegenthaler and Lam (1992); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you see each trip you take as a singular event?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you see each trip as a sort of step in lifetime of traveling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a sense of linkage between your individual trips?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effort based on skill, knowledge, or training</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel there are any special skills or knowledge needed to take road trips? What might those be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Durable benefits</strong></td>
<td>Kim et al. (1997); Siegenthaler and Lam (1992); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does road traveling make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What benefits do you feel you get from taking road trips?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique ethos</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do your non-road tripping friends think of your trips?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your feelings towards other road trippers you see?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about people in the same type of vehicle? Different vehicles?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification with chosen pursuit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider traveling to be your primary recreational pursuit?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If so, what made you realize that it would be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you could not travel, how might that change how you view yourself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think your life would be like then?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Quantitative

The quantitative component of this study was examined using standard statistical analyses. Demographic, trip details, and leisure career history were examined as robustly as their data types would allow, which was mainly through cross-tabulation and comparison-of-means. The ordinal data obtained from the second part of the survey was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (Byrne, 2001) and then structural equation modeling (Cole, 1987) to examine how well the data obtained matched theorized models pertaining to the relationship between serious leisure and its component elements as stated by Stebbins (1982, 2007). These scales were also used in comparison-of-means analysis (ANOVA) to determine differences between groups, such as between serious and project-based recreationists.

Qualitative

During analysis of the transcribed interviews, particular attention was given to finding patterns and similarities amongst the respondents that emerge. As the interview format consisted of structured questions, stages of the coding and sorting processes were already accomplished (Weiss, 1994) and material extraneous to that which pertains to the study were reduced. Subsequent coding allowed the division of similar responses into types from which a “demonstration of causation” (Weiss, 1994), or a description of events or factors that indicate why or how self-drivers came to pursue their activity as a
project-based or serious undertaking, can be crafted. Responses were also matched with the quantitative data to examine patterns that may exist between the two and to allow for confirmation and corroboration of the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Verification of results followed established methods for qualitative grounded theory studies. Validity was checked in several ways. First, discriminate sampling was used to review and check the data collected by posing questions and seeing that the data supports them (Creswell, 1998). Coding was performed once, and then the data was set aside for three months before coding was repeated so as to determine that the same, or very similar, coding results were found. Coding was also then performed by two outside parties who were familiar with qualitative methods but who were unfamiliar with this study or the data. Results obtained from these outside codings were similar to the initial coding, further supporting the validity of the data and coding. The results and theories developed were then compared to published studies and reports (Guinn, 1980; Niziol, 2006; etc.) to check that the findings are not inexplicably different (Creswell, 1998).

**Pilot Test**

Participant-observer data was collected during the 2006 summer tourist season in Alaska, the Yukon, and British Columbia by the author to aid in the design of the survey instrument. Potential survey sites and survey times were examined, as well as methods of identifying self-drive recreationists and distributing surveys. A pilot test was conducted prior to the actual data collection so as to discover any issues that need to be addressed with the survey instrument or interview format. This test was conducted at sites in the Tiadaghton and Tioga state forests in Pennsylvania in the spring of 2007 in conjunction
with a forest use monitoring study. It consisted of items nearly identical to those in the
survey designed for Alaska, only many were adjusted slightly to account for their being
administered in Pennsylvania instead of the North. This survey was administered to
volunteers from the forest use study, and confusing wording of questions, survey length
and completion time, and general survey layout were slightly adjusted based on
respondent comments so as to make the instrument more user-friendly and likely to be
completed correctly.
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Orientation to Chapter 2

Chapter 2 has been written as a stand-alone article to be submitted at a later date for consideration for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This chapter has been crafted to address the following dissertation research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1: Can segments of the self-drive recreation market to Alaska be classified as enthusiasts in form of serious leisure?

RQ2: Can the remaining segments of the self-drive recreation market be classified as undertaking project-based leisure?

RQ4: Can a project-based leisure road trip be a marker in what may evolve into a serious leisure career?

H1: Self-drive recreation can be classified as falling under either serious or project-based leisure.

H5: Previous self-drive recreation trips undertaken as project-based leisure will serve as landmarks in the leisure careers of those who now enjoy the activity as a serious pursuit.
CHAPTER 2

TAKING ROAD TRIPS SERIOUSLY: SERIOUS LEISURE

DEDICATION IN PARTICIPANTS OF SELF-DRIVE RECREATION

ABSTRACT

Research was conducted to examine if self-drive recreation, particularly self-drive tourism trips to Alaska and northwestern Canada, could be classifiable as examples of Stebbins’ serious leisure (2007) and/or project-based leisure (2005). Although serious leisure has a long history of academic interest and support, self-drive recreation had previously been unstudied in the context of leisure theory, and no empirical studies had been published pertaining to project-based leisure. Qualitative interviews were conducted during the 2007 summer self-drive tourist season at public campgrounds in Alaska. Subsequent analysis of these interviews determined that the majority of the tourists interviewed experienced and described the six elements of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982), and thus were classifiable as such. The remaining tourists met the criteria for project-based leisure. This study also revealed that the delineation between serious and the newer project-based leisure may be highly subjective, especially as no concrete definitions exist for the element of the serious leisure career whose presence or absence is the most important variation between the two classifications. Additionally, the self-drive recreation market was identified as having unique characteristics that could make it a fruitful area for further leisure research.
INTRODUCTION

Dating back nearly to the invention of the automobile itself, the road trip has been a recreational staple of many industrialized nations (Hugill, 1985). No other means of tourism transportation allows for such independence of movement, flexibility of itinerary, and myriad of destinations (Prideaux & Carson, 2003). Assuming that one owns a vehicle, as millions of Americans already do, the only unavoidable additional expense aside from wear and tear on the vehicle is fuel. The lack of a need for reservations or tickets also makes this the most spontaneous of tourism transportation methods. Of all the motorized forms of transport, none allows for such an intimate and personal examination of the terrain between destinations, and the requirement that at least one member of the traveling party operate the vehicle adds another even deeper level of interaction to the journey. Flying from Maine to Mexico City, for instance, hardly has the emotional and sensational appeal that a drive between those points would illicit. Owing to these qualities, self-drive tourism has become the most popular means of tourism in Western developed countries such as the United States, Australia, and Western Europe (Prideaux & Carson, 2003). It has even incorporated itself into Western popular culture through novels such as On the Road, television shows such as Route 66, and numerous movies (Cohan & Hark, 1997; Laderman, 2002; Mills, 2006).

Despite this popularity, self-drive recreation has long been neglected by travel and leisure academics (Walsh et al., 1990) and has only recently come under serious academic scrutiny in conjunction with established social science theories (Carson & Waller, 2002). Serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007), on the other hand, is a well-established theory examining the level of devotion and attachment that some people have towards
specific recreational activities. However, the new off-shoot of the serious leisure theory, project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2005), has yet to be empirically examined. Both self-drive recreation and serious leisure theory are ideal for mutual study, as a visible minority of devotees to self-drive recreation appear to engage in this activity with the same passion and dedication that are hallmarks of serious leisure. This study seeks to increase knowledge of the phenomenon of self-drive tourism, as well as the theory of serious leisure and its adjutant project-based leisure, by attempting to examine the levels of leisure dedication in long-distance self-drive recreationists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Drive Recreation

Several definitions have been proposed to describe self-drive recreation, colloquially known in North America as “road trips” or “driving for pleasure”, and although there are variations, all contain basically the same core elements. Olsen (2002) defined the “drive market” as “those travelers who participate in ‘drive holidays’,” (p. 11), but did not then adequately define what a “drive holiday” was. Scott (2002) noted that “it is possible to define drive tourism as travel by car or bus more than 40 kilometers for tourist purposes. It may be subdivided into categories such as self-drive/own car or self-drive/rented car although no taxonomic structure has been accepted in the literature,” (pp. 81-82). Scott interestingly adds the seemingly arbitrary “40-kilometer” rule without any support for that number, and does not indicate whether or not the bus travel mentioned in the definition includes packaged tours. Prideaux, Wei, and Ruys (2001) have another definition of self-drive tourism: “Tourism that centres on traveling from an
origin point to a destination by car that is either privately owned or rented, and engaging in tourism-related activities during that journey,” (p. 211). The definition used by Tourism Queensland, as cited in Olsen (2002), adds a time element to this, stating that self-drive tourism occurred when people are “traveling away from home for at least one night, on holidays or visiting friends and relatives, in their own, a rented or borrowed vehicle, as the primary mode of transport,” (p. 18). While this is the most comprehensive definition found, it still leaves something to be desired as it leaves out any distance requirement. According to the Tourism Queensland definition, if a family were to drive down the street to spend the night with their relatives, this would qualify as drive tourism. It also does not take into consideration individuals who fly half-way around the world and then rent vehicles at their destinations. A couple from Amsterdam who fly to Las Vegas and then rent a recreational vehicle and drive it for 5,000 miles through the American Southwest might not be considered drive tourists, as their primary mode of transportation, if distance were to be considered, would still be by airplane. Without a suitable definition found in the sparse literature on the subject, the following working definition is proposed: *Self-drive tourism, or “road-tripping”, is the movement of people for recreational purposes in a vehicle driven by a member of their party for a distance that is sufficiently far enough away from their homes that travel to and from the destination or destinations cannot be completed in one day.*

Although consensus on a definition of self-drive tourism has not been reached in the literature, other aspects have been generally agreed upon. One is that the self-drive recreation market is extremely large, especially in some developed countries. Carson and Waller (2002) claim that 80% of all trips in Australia taken by Australians are instances
of self-drive tourism. Olsen (2002) and Prideaux and Carson (2003) cite a lower 70% figure. A study by Destination Analysts, Inc. (2006) of 1,043 Americans who traveled for leisure in the past 12 months found that 88.3% traveled by automobile.

Despite the apparent high popularity and participation rates, self-drive recreation has surprisingly been largely ignored in academic studies. Analysis of the American culture since the first decade of the 1900s shows that the automobile, and vacations by automobile, have been popular with the masses since the introduction of the Ford Model T in 1908, and even earlier amongst the elite (Hugill, 1985; Rothman, 1998). References to road trips are rife in American popular culture, and there paradoxically seem to be more academic works that examine road trip movies than there are ones that examine the road trip phenomenon itself (Cohan & Hark, 1997; Laderman, 2002; Mills, 2006). Much of the little research that has been conducted specifically on self-drive recreation has come out of and been focused on Australia. One collection of studies edited by Carson, Waller, and Scott (2002) specifically looks at the Australian self-drive market, including studies examining the market of self-drive tourists (Scott, 2002); comparing self-drive tourism to the special interest tourism market (Derrett, 2002); proposing the use of cluster marketing to improve tourism development in Tasmania (Sproule, 2002); examining Australian seniors as self-drive tourists (Prideaux, 2002); and studying caravan-park users (Marles, 2002). The other major theme was the development of strategies to promote drive tourism along certain routes (Ware & Budge, 2002) or in Australian towns that had been bypassed by tourism (Kelly & Spark, 2002). Other works have also looked
at the senior citizen drive tour market in Australia (Prideaux et al., 2001), as well as examined a model of route choices using the context of Western Australia drive tourism (Taplin & Qiu, 1997).

Few articles have focused on North American self-drive recreation, which is surprising given the greater extent, abundance, diversity, and quality of the North American, and specifically the U.S., road system. No other nation has a larger or more developed highway system than the contiguous United States. Australia, which is roughly the same size, has a dramatically less-developed highway system (National Geographic Society, 2004), yet this is where much of this academic attention has been focused. Two Australian studies have examined the U.S. self-drive tourism market: Hardy (2003) examined the development of touring routes to encourage self-drive tourism in the U.S., while Laws and Scott (2003) proposed that dinosaur and fossil-themed destinations could attract road trippers to rural parts of Queensland as well as the Western United States. One of the few American studies to focus specifically on the phenomenon of self-drive tourism was by Pennington-Gray (2003) who researched self-drive tourists in Florida who were visiting friends and relatives. Other American studies have included or mentioned the self-drive market, but these were aimed more at examining some other tourism topic, such as visitor center use (Stewart et al., 1993; Fesenmaier, 1994) or drive-through travelers and unplanned attraction visits (Perdue 1986), and merely used the self-drive segment as a convenient context and not as the focus of the study. Clearly, given this lack of published material and the obviously large scope of the self-drive recreation market in the United States, there is a need for more research on this topic in North America.
Perhaps one reason for the surprising lack of research on self-drive recreation, especially prior to the last few years, was a notably mistaken assumption that participants in self-drive recreation were unadventurous and not as interesting to study. Plog (1973; 1990), in his study of the different personality types of tourists, specifically flyers and non-flyers, suggested that there was a continuum of travelers moving between two poles. At one side were the “psychocentric” travelers who tend to be anxious, inhibited, unadventurous, and who prefer familiar destinations with commonplace activities, heavy tourist accommodations, and low activity levels (Pearce, 1995). On the other end are the “allocentrics” who are self-confident and adventurous and who travel to non-touristy areas seeking novel experiences, immersion in different cultures, and activity (D. Pearce, 1995; Burns & Holden, 1995). Plog (1973) characterized psychocentrics as preferring destinations that they could drive to, while allocentrics would rather fly. This stance on the self-drive market has been repeated several times in the literature (Pearce, 1995; Burns & Holden, 1995; Rothman, 1998), and perhaps it has come to be a standard assumption. While certainly some self-drive tourists would fall into the psychocentric end of the continuum, relegating all to that end suggests an undue stereotyping by Plog. It seems inappropriate to classify automobile recreationists who travel overland from Florida to Alaska as being less adventurous than those who would choose to fly the same route, especially when the road trip would offer more chances to experience the region and break out of the protective “tourist bubble” (Smith, 1977). Thus, there appears to be a need for a better understanding of the self-drive recreation submarkets, especially in terms of motivations and preferences, to avoid such inaccurate lump-classifications.
Those who have examined self-drive tourism readily agree that all self-drive tourists are by no means all the same: “Recent research into the drive tourism market has shown that drive tourists do not represent a homogenous group of people, although they do share some common characteristics,” (Hardy, 2003; p. 315) and, “Within this broad definition of the drive market there are without doubt a number of different segments encapsulating a range of different holiday types,” Olsen (2002; p. 11). Prideaux et al. (2001), Pennington-Gray (2003), and Prideaux and Carson (2003) all agree. The larger self-drive tourism market has shown to be divisible by their reasons for travel (Prideaux et al, 2001; Laws & Scott, 2003), demographics (Prideaux, 2002); lifestyle (Hardy, 2003); type of vehicle, length of time away from home, and accommodation preferences (Marles, 2002; Prideaux & Carson, 2003).

**Serious Leisure**

Serious leisure has been defined as “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist, or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (p. 17) by Stebbins (1997), who first proposed the theory in 1982. In numerous subsequent works he has expanded on this theory (1992, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2007).

Stebbins (1982) identified six elements that must be present in order for an activity to qualify as serious leisure (Figure 2.1). The first is that participants must persevere at their activity of choice; that is, they must overcome difficulties from time to time in the pursuit of their recreation. Participants are dedicated enough that they do not
give up in the face of adversity, and even gain a sense of accomplishment at overcoming it. The second element of serious leisure is that there is the tendency for participants to develop careers in their chosen activities. Recreationists in serious leisure create and build upon a history of their participation and can look back and identify instances of significance that have affected subsequent participation. Third, serious leisure requires personal effort based upon skill, knowledge, or training. There needs to be some form of learning that increases competency in the activity and that can be expressed through some work or struggle, and the acquisition of skills or knowledge through this training often marks turning points in the previously mentioned career aspect of serious leisure.

Stebbins describes the fourth identifying characteristic of serious leisure as being that the activity must produce durable benefits for the participant. These benefits provide an impetus for participation, as well as for overcoming adversity. Stebbins identified eight such benefits that may be present: self-actualization, self-enrichment, recreation or renewal, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, self-expression, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity. Self-gratification, or “fun”, can also result, though such a benefit is not unique to serious leisure. The fifth characteristic of serious leisure is the unique ethos that develops around it because of the subcultures created by participants. Stebbins notes that serious leisure activities encourage the formation of social worlds amongst those with shared experiences, interests, and mutual understanding.
The sixth and final element indicated by Stebbins is a sense of identity with the recreational pursuit. Participants are excited and enthusiastic about their chosen activities, are often willing to share them with others, and may be more inclined to label themselves as participants in their activities than by their occupations or position in life (Stebbins, 1982; 2001; 2007). This element reflects some of the discussion about leisure commitment, particularly along the lines of centrality and ego-involvement. Centrality (Kim et al., 1997; Scott & Shafer, 2001; Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004) is the extent to which a person’s life is tied to a recreational activity. It pertains to what degree that activity is connected to the participant’s lifestyle, social networks, and identity. Ego-involvement (Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992) is how much an individual identifies him or herself with an activity. Sometimes this ego-involvement can become so strong as to lead to centrality. Other times, it is possible that centrality can lead to ego-involvement, where “a person is internally committed to a leisure activity, role, or relationship when he or she sees it as expressing a valued asset of his or her identity,” (Shamir, 1988, p 244).

Figure 2.1. Model of the component elements of serious leisure.
The theory of serious leisure has been retested and refined in the literature for the past 25 years, and has been applied to the study of a wide range of recreational activities (Stebbins, 2007). A strong precedent has been set in studying particular activities to determine if they meet the criteria of serious leisure, and is illustrated by the plethora of pursuits that have been examined. Studies have focused on serious leisure in activities as varied as Australian bushwalking (Hamilton-Smith, 1993); bridge (Scott & Godbey, 1993); curling (Apostle, 1992); dog clubs (Baldwin & Norris, 1999; Gillespie et al., 2002); fishing (Yoder, 1997); ice skating (McQuarrie & Jackson, 1996); kayaking (Kane & Zink, 2004); learning (Jones & Symon, 2001; Stebbins, 1994); mushrooming (Fine, 1998); owning second homes in France (Chaplin, 1999); peace activism (Parker, 1987); running (Yair, 1990 & 1992; Goff et al., 1997); Sea Cadet Corps volunteering (Raisborough, 1999); shuffle-boarding (Snyder, 1986); sports fandom (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Jones, 2000; Gibson et al., 2002); tourism (Hall & Weiler, 1992; Stebbins, 1996; Kane & Zink, 2004); war re-enactors (Mittelstaedt, 1995; Hunt, 2004); and windsurfing (Wheaton, 2000). This variety of literature on the theory shows that it has been vigorously tested and expanded, garnering it respect amongst academics.

Serious leisure comprises one leg of the tripod of what Stebbins (2007) has termed the “basic serious leisure framework” (p. 5). The others are casual leisure and project-based leisure. Stebbins defined casual leisure as an “immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it. In broad, colloquial terms, it could serve as the scientific term for the practice of doing what comes naturally,” (1997; p. 18). In many ways, it serves as a foil to serious leisure as it is essentially the opposite of more determined leisure pursuits. Project-based
leisure, a newer concept first proposed by Stebbins in 2005 (p. 2), is a “short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time. It requires considerable planning, effort, and sometimes skill or knowledge, but for all that is neither serious leisure nor intended to develop into such”. This form is in effect serious leisure without the element of a career, as it contains all of the other elements, although due to the reduced level of participation the notion of a unique social world and ethos surrounding the activity may be significantly reduced (Stebbins, 2005) (Figure 2.2). This lack of a sense of career, or an indefinite continuation of participation, can possibly be the result of relative recent exposure to the activity, lower levels of satisfaction, or lack of enough discretionary time or income. Instead of foregoing an activity altogether if they can not make it a central life pursuit, participants merely enjoy it infrequently.

Stebbins divided project-based leisure into two forms based upon the frequency of the recreation: one-shot projects and occasional projects (2007). One-shot projects occur only once and are not repeated. Occasional projects happen repeatedly, but there is a significant time lag between the end of one and the start of the next. This creates a distinct independence for each project. Thus, unlike serious leisure, occasional projects are not continuous undertakings. Yet, these individual events can sometimes act as “markers” in leisure careers (Kane & Zink, 2004), where each represents an important turning point in a developing leisure calling.

No empirical studies have yet been published examining project-based leisure, perhaps owing to the freshness of this theory.
Serious Leisure, Leisure Commitment, and Leisure Specialization

Stebbins’ theory has much in common with the theory of leisure commitment, which Becker (1960) described as “consistent behavior that persists over time and that is in part characterized by the rejection of comparable alternative activities,” (Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992; p. 304). Kim, Scott, and Crompton (1997) offered an alternate but similar definition: “Those personal and behavioral mechanisms that bind individuals to consistent patterns of leisure behavior,” (p. 323). Buchanan (1985) stated that there are three elements to recreational commitment: “(1) a consistent devotion of time and energy to the activity, (2) the presence of side bets or investments in the activity such as knowledge acquisition, and (3) an affective attachment to the activity,” (Bloch, Black, & Lichtenstein, 1989; p.189). Also central to this notion of leisure commitment is a resistance to change. This can be due to a desire to continue based on rewards, such as when participants continue at an activity because they enjoy the benefits of participation (Shamir, 1988; Yair, 1992). Resistance can also be caused by the costs associated with discontinuing participation. If a person has invested greatly in an activity to which they
are committed, such as through investments in time and equipment, they may stand to lose what they have put into the activity if there were to stop it (Kim et al., 1997; Kyle et al., 2004). This is especially true for larger purchases, such as summer homes, boats, or recreational vehicles (Shamir, 1988). Participants may also stand to lose social connections if they discontinue participation (Jones, 2000).

Leisure commitment has been found to be closely linked to recreation specialization, which can be described as a progression in expertise in a recreational pursuit (Kuentzel & McDonald, 1992; McIntyre & Pigram, 1992; Scott and Shafer, 2001). This theory holds that people who are committed to an activity may become better and better at it, and this will lead to a progression of increasing proficiency and specificity. In other words, recreationists often become better and more involved with their pursuits the longer they are engaged with them. There is a continuum of increasing specialization, starting at a stage of broad interest and little experience, and progressing with increasing investment, skill development, and commitment to a level of deep expertise (Kuentzel & McDonald, 1992). However, it is not always possible to demark a precise beginning and end to these stages (Scott & Shafer, 2001), though there can be important turning points in the leisure career that mark such progressions (Stebbins, 1992; Scott & Shafer, 2001).

Serious leisure clearly has much in common with the theories of leisure commitment and specialization. Both serious leisure and commitment describe strong feelings of identity (Stebbins, 1982), centrality (Kim, Scott, & Crompton, 1997; Scott & Shafer, 2001; Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004, and ego-involvement (Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992) with a chosen activity. There are also shared notions of personal investment, social
interaction, and other benefits (Stebbins, 1982; Kim et al, 1997). The idea of a leisure career, as well as markers or turning points in those careers (Kane & Zink, 2000; Scott & Shafer, 2001), are also strongly evident in the theory of specialization. The acquisition of skills and knowledge is also an important facet of both serious leisure and specialization (Stebbins, 1982; Scott & Shafer, 2001).

With so many shared characteristics, it seems acceptable to label serious leisure as a part or type of leisure commitment—if indeed they are actually not one in the same—and that it could not exist with leisure specialization. However, an exhaustive review of the literature does not turn up any other indication of this notion, and both theories have evolved along their own lines of research fairly independently from each other. While this particular study is focusing on serious leisure theory, it will also incorporate ideas from both commitment and specialization theory, and treat them as generally all part of the same larger theory.

**PURPOSE**

Self-drive recreation has been largely neglected in the published literature despite its mass popularity, and it is especially lacking academic examination under established leisure theories. Project-based leisure, likewise, has not been empirically studied in the literature. Clearly there is a need for increased research on each, and fortunately, both areas appear to be ideally suited areas for mutual study.
Long-distance self-drive recreationists, such as those who drive from the contiguous 48 states to Alaska, obviously require considerable planning in order for their trips to be successful. They are deeply involved with their activity for the duration of their trip; however, for many, this involvement ends when the trip is finished. Such deep involvement in self-drive recreation, coupled with a distinct ending point, seems to fit the concept of project-based leisure (Stebbins 2005, 2007). For those who travel repeatedly and view such traveling as their primary leisure pursuit, with each trip being a small part of a much larger overall grand travel plan, individual trips would serve as markers in their leisure careers (Kane & Zink, 2004). Additionally, within the segment of long-distance road-trippers, there is a subset that has foregone permanent homes and instead has adopted a more nomadic lifestyle of fairly continuous travel (Guinn, 1980; Moeller & Moeller, 1998; Russell & Russell, 2007). This subset appears to be participating in self-drive recreation as an extreme form of serious leisure. With further study, more of the elements of serious leisure could be identified and empirically measured in self-drive recreation and it could come to be classified as such for strong adherents. Therefore, at least at first glance, it seems as though self-drive recreation provides an example of an activity that is undertaken as project-based leisure for some and as serious leisure for others. Each can serve as a context for deepening the understanding of the other, as serious and project-based leisure theory can be applied to long-distance self-drive recreation to gain insights into the motivations of the participants just as the dichotomy of perpetual and infrequent road-trippers can provide a context for understanding the relationship between serious and project-based leisure.
Thus, the principal aim of this study is to enhance the understanding of both self-drive recreation and project-based leisure by examining both in the framework of the other. As numerous other recreational activities have been shown to be pursued as serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007), and as self-drive recreation does not demonstrate any obvious reason why it too could not be, it is hypothesized that self-drive recreation can be classified as an activity undertaken as serious leisure. Casual observations of the activity have also indicated that it will likely meet the criteria set forth for project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2005), so it is hypothesized that it can also be classified as such for those who do not create a “leisure career” in it. It is also hypothesized that previous self-drive recreation tourism trips undertaken as project-based leisure for some will serve as landmarks in the leisure careers of those who now enjoy the activity as a serious pursuit, thus indicating an evolution of one into the other.

While the results from this study will increase understanding and offer insights into self-drive recreation and the theory of project-based leisure, it is also hoped that some of the information gleaned will be useful for the management and marketing of self-drive recreation, especially in Alaska and Northwestern Canada. Tourism accounts for at least 5% of the GDP and at least 8% of the employment of the Yukon (Government of Yukon 2004). Although the 125,000 self-drive tourists that visit Alaska each summer (Niziol, 2006) are only a tiny fraction of the number of what other destinations in the contiguous United States may receive, this figure does equal nearly 20% of the Alaskan population of roughly 640,000 residents (State of Alaska, 2007). Furthermore, self-drive recreation and tourism is extremely important to the economies of the small, isolated communities along the few highways that serve as service centers, such as Tok, Delta
Junction, and Glennallen in Alaska, and Haines Junction and Watson Lake in the Yukon. Insights gained into the nature of participants in self-drive recreation could be used to help such communities better market their services to these travelers.

**METHODS**

The researcher had extensive knowledge both as a participant and as an observer of the self-drive recreation market in Alaska in Northwestern Canada that informed his design of this study and its implementation. Having been a resident of Fairbanks, Alaska for 10 years, he observed and worked with the annual tourist migrations, and became intimately familiar with the varieties of tourists and their preferences. After acquiring an all-wheel drive station wagon, he had spent the last 8 years participating in self-drive recreation, having driven from the East Coast of the U.S. to Alaska and back three times. He has intimate knowledge of the geography and history of nearly all the non-urban roadways in Alaska, having driven every highway and wilderness road in mainland Alaska not requiring four-wheel drive at least once, if not repeatedly, including the Dalton Highway to the Arctic Ocean and most of the roads in the Yukon and northern British Columbia. Also, his knowledge of this tourism market, and the larger Northern recreation industry, has been informed by professional and personal relationships with representatives of the Alaska State Parks, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S Border Patrol, U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Environment Yukon, and the city governments of Juneau, Anchorage, and Whitehorse. This extensive knowledge and experience, fueled by a personal passion for the activity of driving, the character of the roads in this region, and the land itself,
allowed for the crafting of a study that could target and find self-drive tourists and
contain survey items designed to illicit information about leisure attachment as it relates
to self-drive recreation.

Study Area

This study was conducted throughout Alaska and Northwestern Canada, a region
that was chosen not only because it is a popular self-drive recreation destination
(Valencia, 2006), but also because the considerable distance from population centers and
the rougher conditions of travel to and throughout it presuppose a higher level of
commitment in drivers towards reaching their destination. The two nearest major
metropolitan areas to Anchorage, Alaska are Edmonton, Alberta and Vancouver, British
Columbia, which are 1,975 and 2,287 road miles away, respectively. Vancouver and
Edmonton are additionally fairly distant from much of the U.S., and even many parts of
Canada (Valencia, 2006). There are no expressways between these two cities and
Alaska, and all road travel must follow either the Alaska Highway or more primitive
roads such as the Cassiar Highway in British Columbia or the Top of the World Highway
between Alaska and the Yukon, which have long sections without pavement. Even the
Alaska Highway itself has had pavement removed for years in large construction projects
in the Yukon, and lengthy stretches across the U.S./Canada border and south of the
Yukon border are fraught with potholes, frost heaves, and gravel breaks. A relative
scarcity of services along the highways when compared to most of the rest of the North
American highway network further adds to the difficulty of motor travel. A trip to and from Alaska, therefore, is not one to be taken lightly, and seemed a suitable framework in which to study serious leisure.

Approximately 125,000 self-drive tourists enter Alaska each year (Niziol, 2006). Although no statistics could be found for exact numbers, a visibly sizeable number of tourists fly to the Alaska or the Yukon and then rent vehicles for the length of their stay, adding to this large base. These high numbers of visitors, coupled with the fact that there are few highways throughout the region and a small number of developed facilities for overnight stays, creates concentrated areas of road-tripper visitation that make finding and contacting self-drive tourists easier.

Surveying methods

A participant-observer (Glancy, 1986) pilot study was conducted by the author during the 2006 summer tourist season in Alaska and the Yukon Territory. This tourist season runs roughly from mid-May to mid-September. Combined with observations gained from several years of residency in Alaska and extensive travel throughout the state and Northwest Canada, this pilot study helped in the identification of self-drive recreationist habits, potential survey locations, and questions that would be relevant for the survey.

Semi-structured open-ended qualitative interviews (Gibson et al., 2002; Marles, 2002) were conducted with self-drive recreationists staying at campgrounds and RV parks. These interviews all employed the same questions, but varied the order to more fluidly accommodate the conversation with the interviewees. The target population of
this study was self-drive recreationists in Alaska and the Yukon Territory, including those who flew to the region and then rented vehicles. This population was sampled and interviewed in the field during the middle of the mid-May to mid-September summer tourist season of 2007. The rest of the year sees a dramatic drop in tourists, as can be expected in the face of strong winter weather and greatly diminished daylight. The central landmass of Alaska experienced generally good weather in the summer of 2007, with many warmer days and no extensive periods of rain. Forest fires—an issue every summer in the Northern interior—were not nearly as much of an issue as they had been in past years, and most areas were free of smoke that can reduce visibility. Gas prices in the more developed areas of Alaska were at or below national averages for most of the summer, with the average price of a gallon of unleaded costing about $3.00 to $3.10. More remote areas saw higher gasoline prices, with Haines and Prudhoe Bay selling $3.69. The highest price for fuel found along the highway system was $3.89 per gallon at Coldfoot, which is an isolated village on the Dalton Highway far above the Arctic Circle and hundreds of miles from the next gas stations, so travelers must buy fuel to there continue north or south. The Yukon and northern British Columbia had higher prices, with the average being about $5 to $5.50 per gallon after conversions are made from Canadian dollars per liter. The Alaska Department of Commerce reported that the Alaskan/Canadian border saw 194,200 people leave Alaska during the summer of 2007, representing a minor decrease of 2.6% over the previous year. Ferry exits were down 6.3%, but air exits increased by 2.2% and cruise ship traffic increased 9.2% (McDowell Group, 2007).
Study sites were chosen from a convenience sample of locations where permission could be obtained to administer the surveys. Public campgrounds and RV parks were chosen as locations for surveying for several reasons. First, personal experience of the author has shown that people engaged in traveling are most likely to be willing to discuss their experiences when they have settled down for the evening and are eating or relaxing. Similar studies of self-drive recreationists in remote regions have reached the same conclusions (Lane & Waitt, 2007). The extended summer sunlight of this region also made conducting the interview outdoors in the evening much easier. Second, campgrounds provided easy identification of self-drive tourists as they would be found near their vehicles, and the open nature of campgrounds made approaching such recreationists far easier. Finally, despite the vast size of this region, campgrounds and RV parks are few and far between, especially outside of the few urban areas. Thus, their locations are often well known through publications such as The Milepost (Valencia, 2006) and they serve as magnets to the travelers in particular parts of this region who are inclined to stay at campgrounds.

Identification of self-drive recreationists was initially made through observing license plates. For tourists who flew to Alaska or the Yukon and then rented vehicles, identification was possible despite their local license plates by observing rental company decals, bar-code stickers, general newness and cleanliness, as well as through the fact that the common models in the rental fleets that summer, such as Dodge Caliburs and Chevrolet Impalas and Cobalts, are not generally popular amongst locals and thus are easily identifiable as rentals.
Interviews were administered to the participants employing a theoretical sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) regimen to cover the widest possible range of travelers to this region (Weiss, 1994). However, all respondents were Caucasian, as this demographic appeared to comprise the vast majority of self-drive tourists to this region. An Asian group was identified and approached, but they were not fluent in English and declined to be interviewed. A group from France also declined for the same reason.

The interview employed a list of guiding questions (Lane & Waitt, 2007), and following a modified grounded-theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which consisted of a variety of questions aimed at soliciting demographic information, details pertaining to this particular trip to Alaska, information about previous trip experience, and questions related to each of Stebbins’ (1982) six elements of serious leisure. The exact order and wording was flexible, after a similar study by Baldwin and Norris (1999), and the interview was conducted in a generally conversational manner. Tourists traveling as couples were interviewed together. Care was taken to identify any conflicting opinions or disagreements between such couples, and none were identified as all of the couples appeared to agree with and support each others’ answers. Informal conversations were also had with many respondents taking the quantitative survey as well, as they were exceedingly eager to discuss their experiences and make use of the author’s knowledge of the region. Similar to the work performed in Northwest Australia by Lane and Waitt (2007), pertinent observations and insights from these conversations were also recorded. The guiding questions are presented in Table 2.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Goff, et al. (1997); Jones (2000); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you choose to drive to/through Alaska?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you like to travel independently by car/RV?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you take trips like this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does road traveling make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Road trip history</strong></td>
<td>Kane &amp; Zink (2004); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you first come to enjoy traveling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were your early trips like?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where have you gone?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you get there? Where do you stay? What do you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you take road trips?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe your typical traveling pattern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What investments or lifestyle changes have you made for this activity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constraints</strong></td>
<td>Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would these difficulties ever be enough to keep you from traveling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would ever stop you from traveling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does road traveling make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you ever want to travel full-time, or at least for a larger part of the year? If so, why aren’t you doing it now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What conditions would need to be met for you to do so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perseverance</strong></td>
<td>Baldwin and Norris (1999); Stebbins (1982, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does road traveling make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the trips completely fun for you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there some difficulties along the way?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What might these be? How do you feel after overcoming them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of Career</strong></td>
<td>Kim et al. (1997); Siegenthaler and Lam (1992); Stebbins (1982, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you see each trip you take as a singular event?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you see each trip as a sort of step in lifetime of traveling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a sense of linkage between your individual trips?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effort based on skill, knowledge, or training</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel there are any special skills or knowledge needed to take road trips? What might those be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Durable benefits</strong></td>
<td>Kim et al. (1997); Siegenthaler and Lam (1992); Stebbins (1982, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does road traveling make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What benefits do you feel you get from taking road trips?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique ethos</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do your non-road tripping friends think of your trips?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your feelings towards other road trippers you see?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about people in the same type of vehicle? Different vehicles?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification with chosen pursuit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider traveling to be your primary recreational pursuit?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If so, what made you realize that it would be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you could not travel, how might that change how you view yourself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think your life would be like then?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twenty-five interviews in all were conducted with self-drive recreationists, consisting of nine individuals and sixteen couples. Three groups of interviewees were encountered more than once during the summer, all more than 600 miles from the initial contact points (pointedly illustrating the relatively small number of roads and overnight facilities despite the vast size of this region), and any additional comments they made were added to their previous interviews. Characteristics of the interviewees are summarized in Table 2.2.

Verification of results followed established methods for qualitative grounded theory studies. Validity was checked in several ways. First, discriminate sampling was used to review and check the data collected by posing questions and seeing that the data supported them (Creswell, 1998). Coding was performed once, and then the data was set aside for three months before coding was repeated so as to determine that the same, or very similar, coding results were found. Coding was also then performed by two outside parties, one of whom was quite familiar with qualitative methods and one who was not. Both reviewers were unfamiliar with this study or the data. Results obtained from these outside codings were similar to the initial coding, further supporting the validity of the data and coding. The results and theories developed were then compared to published studies and reports (Guinn, 1980; Niziol, 2006; etc.) to check that the findings are not inexplicably different (Creswell, 1998).
Table 2.2. Profiles of self-drive recreationists interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee and Party’s Sexes and Ages</th>
<th>Retired</th>
<th>Vehicle Type</th>
<th>Home Town</th>
<th>Education Achieved</th>
<th>Income Achieved</th>
<th>Retirement if italicized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. F 65; M 67</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Class-A RV</td>
<td>Tucson, AZ</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>$25-49K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. F 62; M 70; F 37; M 9; M 5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Class-A RV</td>
<td>Santa Ana, CA</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>$50-74K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. F 64; M 66</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Class-A RV</td>
<td>Renoldsburg, OH</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>$25-49K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. F 63; M 65; F 36; M 8; M 6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Truck/Sth Wheel</td>
<td>Weatherford, TX</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>$&gt;150K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. F 66; M 63</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Class-B RV</td>
<td>Mabank, TX</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>$25-49K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. F 58; M 61</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Class-A RV</td>
<td>Lubbock, TX</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>$50-74K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. F 61; F 26</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Sedan</td>
<td>Sedona, AZ</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>$25-49K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. F 44; M 45</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Truck/Sth Wheel</td>
<td>Fort Lee, VA</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>$25-49K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. F 59; M 58</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Truck/Pop-Up</td>
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<td>Master’s</td>
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RESULTS

As the questions were designed to address each of the six elements of serious leisure, as well as project-based leisure, additional coding of the data was minimal. Saturation of information (Creswell, 1998) for most answers was reached fairly quickly, with only a few outlying interviewees not sharing largely similar feelings. A majority (17, or 68%) of the travelers demonstrated the elements of serious leisure. There were slightly fewer who exhibited the full sense of career as described by Stebbins (1982, 2007), and those who did not were further queried so as to determine that they were indeed participating at least in project-based leisure, if not fully serious leisure.

Perseverance

Most interviewees described situations or feelings that related to perseverance, Stebbins’ first element of serious leisure (1982, 2007) that explains how recreationists in the pursuit of serious leisure are willing to face adversity rather than give up, and that the feelings of overcoming such adversity can be a benefit that encourages further participation. Many of these self-drivers described unpleasant issues they had encountered as part of their drive north to Alaska. Despite recent television advertisements claiming that the Alaska Highway is completely paved (Alaska Travel Industry Association, 2007), in reality there were miles-long sections, such as near Kluane Lake in the Yukon, where the blacktop had been removed for construction. Additionally, many of the paved sections, especially around the Alaska/Yukon and Yukon/British Columbia borders, have a considerable quantity of pot holes, pavement breaks, and frost heaves (where the permafrost under the road has melted, resulting in
wavy, speed-bump like conditions). Other highways in the region may be completely unpaved, as well, and many drivers expressed encountering frustration on these highways:

“Our computer crashed. We had to call and get a box shipped to Anchorage. And then it didn’t go to Anchorage, it went to Soldotna. It’s such a long story… it [the computer] bounced in the trailer. We…weren’t totally cognizant of how things bounce on the, the heaves. The frost heaves. We thought we’d taken precautions, and so that was a major disappointment that we were kind of out of touch… not being able to communicate easily. (Interview 4, Female, Denali Nat. Park)

“Well, we started up the Dalton and got a flat right away, it seemed. We made it to that place just beyond the Yukon crossing. It was completely shredded. The guy there sold us an old tire that he had to fix up that would probably get us back to town. $180! We then had to drive back to Fairbanks [about 150 miles, mostly on dirt roads] to get new tires before we could head back up. At least they don’t have the taxes they do in Texas, so the tires were about the same price. But it ate up more than a whole day. (Interview 21, Female, Prudhoe Bay)

“Sometimes it just becomes so exhausting. Like when you’re on some dirt “highway”. It’s been raining for a week, and the road is all mud, and you just want it to stop raining. You can’t go more than 25 mph because of the washboarding. You have to concentrate completely on the road, but can’t look more than 25 feet ahead ‘cause of the potholes. And you know it’s going to be hours before you get to the end of this silly little trek you took yourself on for no apparent reason—just to see what’s on this road. (Interview 25, Male, Fairbanks)

Interestingly, what were considered obstacles for many travelers were the main attraction for others. The three groups of motorcyclists interviewed all expressed a desire to travel all the dirt highways in Alaska and the Yukon, and found a great thrill in them. None of the drivers of RVs, however (with the exception of one couple towing a Jeep) enjoyed any form of rough roads.

In addition to describing perseverance in the face of immediate obstacles presented by the unusual traveling conditions of the North, some of the interviewees explained difficulties that are more related to their road-tripping lifestyle than to particular trips. These invariably were from travelers who were either full-time RVers or who spent a considerable portion of the year traveling:
Well, probably the most difficult things as far as fulltiming is communication. How are you going to manage your mail? How are you going to pay your bills? How are you going to get your medical stuff taken care of?...And then the other little things, like you aren’t going to the same grocery store every time, so that means that you have to go try to figure out where all the food is on the shelves…and even to figure out what you are going to do about your residency. (Interview 3, Female, Haines)

So what do you do if you don’t live in any one place. I mean, this RV is our home…but it moves. We bought our tow vehicle in Idaho. But we got the RV in Florida. That caused a lot of trouble at the Canadian border when we were trying to cross with vehicles registered in two different states...Plus, when you have a house, it’s value is almost always increasing. Once you drive an RV off the lot, all it does is depreciate. So that’s a financial concern, too. (Interview 20, Male, Whitehorse)

We have a FIAT. We drive around the world. No one here knows how to fix FIAT because they don’t buy FIAT...We lost a key so we could not start the engine anymore if we lost the second key. But then in Bangkok, finally—we had to find someone to program the keys. It’s electronic key. It took us one year to find this person. (Interview 12, Male, Haines)

Effort Based on Knowledge, Skill, and Training

Those self-drive recreationists who owned RVs and motorcycles all described the need for effort based on knowledge, skill, and training (Stebbins, 1982, 2007). They recognized a need to understand how to keep an RV or motorcycle running, how to handle the vehicles in difficult conditions, and the necessity of knowing what equipment to bring:

Uh, we haven’t had a lot of trouble, but a lot of people have trashed the front-end of their tow vehicles. We met a guy in Fairbanks and he had taken out both headlights, fog lights, and his total windshield. And it’s just rocks that his motor home picked up and trashed because he didn’t have the screen that we have… I knew about that because of people I know on the Internet. I knew where to get it and how to put it on. So consequently, we still have our headlights. (Interview 6, Male, Denali Nat. Park)

He does all the maintenance for the RV…and all the mechanics of that and he keeps it going because that could be expensive. He works hard at that. (Interview 3, Female, Haines)

You won’t get very far if you don’t know how to ride your bike. Back down there over those rocks—those were like cricket balls!—I just held on and kept ‘er as steady as I could. 20 k. Still hurts. Plus, you need to know how to prepare. There’s nothing around here. Look at that guy over there—he’s got one? Two extra tires and wheels for his bike! We did get these heated suits. Plug right into the bike. Haven’t needed them yet, but would hate to need them and not have them. …Lots of planning is needed. (Interview 24, Male, Arctic Circle)
The smaller group of interviewees who traveled in automobiles or rented RVs did not seem to agree as much with this element. The travelers in this category were far more likely to see a trip to Alaska as simply requiring basic road tripping knowledge, “…like being able to read a map? And drive?” (Interview 23, Female, Beaver Creek);

“Somebody’s got to be able to read the map. And common sense. And there are a lot of people who don’t have common sense,” (Interview 22, Female, Denali). One interviewee in a car was able to elaborate more on the effort required:

Driving these gravel and dirt roads is not easy. It can be dangerous if you don’t know what you are doing. Probably many people don’t even consider taking them in their trips because they just want an easy drive. You have to know what your vehicle can handle, find the right balance of speed and safety, know when to crawl along. It’s not like driving on the Interstate. When you see a truck coming, you need to move out of the way if you value your windshield. The Feds put out a pamphlet that has so many warnings it is probably meant to scare people away from that road [Dalton Highway], but it just requires experience with this kind of driving. (Interview 25, Male, Fairbanks)

While they may not have all agreed on knowledge, skills, or abilities required for their recreation, all of the drivers expressed that their activity certainly required effort, as the following quotes exemplify:

The drive up here—3,000 miles with nary a freeway. That was effort! All those twists, turns, pot-holes, rocks, heaves, and it’s not like I can just sit back and let someone else drive for me. Well, my wife could drive. But you know what I mean. It was like trucking in the old days. It’s not a Sunday drive by any means. (Interview 9, Male, Denali)

The Haul Road [the Dalton Highway] there. That was a difficulty. No easy drive there. Five miles of it were pretty nice—out of what, 500? …but it was fun! (Interview 5, Male, Denali)

Durable Benefits

All interviewees described benefits that they get from traveling. Many of these benefits could be labeled as emotional, and usually pertained to feelings that self-drive recreation creates in the travelers, such as, “Enjoyment,” (Interview 2, Female, Fairbanks); “Free”, (Interview 2, Male, Fairbanks); and “Relaxed”, (Interview 7, Female,
All self-drivers interviewed described these benefits, though Stebbins’ calls for more durable benefits that provide an impetus for participation. He identified eight benefits: self-actualization, self-enrichment, recreation or renewal, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, self-expression, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity (1982). Some, but not all, of these benefits are needed for an activity to be considered as a serious leisure pursuit (1994), and many were expressed by the travelers interviewed. Self-enrichment was a widely agreed upon benefit, with many respondents indicating that they saw learning about new places and different cultures—and thereby gaining a wider perspective on the world—to be a lasting benefit of their travels: “People, physical environment, it’s all just different and new and neat to see that and to bring that into your own world experience,” (Interview 3, Female, Haines). Such descriptions of experiencing new places and cultures, particularly those free from overbearing tourism infrastructure, illustrate a breaking of the “tourist bubble” described by Smith (1977). Self-actualization was also apparent in a few couples, who made a point to volunteer wherever they traveled:

We wanted to be purposeful in our retirement. Just didn’t want to retire and sit back and do nothing or travel all the time and do nothing. So we, we planned at least three months a year to volunteer our time…we’ve gone to Thailand for six months, we’ve gone to China for three months on mission projects. This is our first experience with the state parks volunteering, (Interview 3, Male, Haines).

Renewal and recreation was another lasting benefit that was obviously apparent from the interviews. “Good health, relaxation, a lot of experiences that you don’t get in the normal workaday nine to five job,” (Interview 6, Male, Denali). Despite a nearly universal agreement that the trips are recreation, a sizable number of respondents
admitted that they often feel worn out, or even exhausted, instead of relaxed, although such feelings were often created by the high level of excitement trips gave them, and were not necessarily a negative feeling.

Social interaction was another of Stebbins’ durable benefits (1982) that was clearly apparent in some of the self-drive recreation participants. The most common form of this interaction noted was amongst members of the same traveling group: “Here I am with my best mate, 200 miles from anywhere, at the [expletive deleted] Arctic Circle! And it’s 3 AM and the sun is out. I couldn’t have flown to Colorado and driven up with just anyone,” (Interview 24, Male, Arctic Circle). Rarer for this activity, and mostly evident in the dedicated repeat travelers, was social interaction with people they would meet during their travels:

We have a series of friends that we met here right in this campground. Met most of them in ’97. And there’s been, what, five different couples that came to our place and camped, that we met here. And we come back, just about like a reunion here. We come back and see all of them,” (Interview 15, Male, Soldotna)

Due to the nature of self-drive recreation, such a scarcity of social interaction can be expected as the participants tend to travel independently and many are largely self-contained in their vehicles. The biggest exceptions would be those who travel in “caravans” where a few to several dozen vehicles all move as a group throughout the region, as well as with those who camp for extended periods in the same place, such as was seen at the popular fishing campground in Soldotna, Alaska.
Unique Ethos

Stebbins’ described the fifth element of serious leisure as the existence of a unique ethos or social world created around the activity because of the subculture of devotees (1982). As with effort based on knowledge, skills, and abilities, this element was highly visible in the most dedicated RVers, but less so in those who rented RVs or drove cars. The strong theme amongst RVers was that people who do not live a mobile lifestyle such as theirs have a hard time understanding them, and they expressed this sense of ethos more as it separated them from non road-trippers than as it connected them to each other:

People who don’t live like this just can’t grasp not staying put all your life—not having a fixed address and doing the same old thing everyday. They can get suspicious. (Interview 20, Male, Whitehorse)

The government came down on us after 9-11. Made us get permanent addresses. We got ours from some fellow in South Dakota who has made a business out of it. But they didn’t like the idea of us roaming around even though we weren’t causing any harm. (Interview 4, Female, Denali)

We were parked at a viewpoint and this tour bus comes out and unloads all these people. And they were all just gawking at our RV and not at the view. Looking at it all over and stuff. Most were amazed that we had such a thing and drove it up here from Texas. They couldn’t believe that. We gave them all the tour. A few guys were looking at their wives and nodding, saying stuff like ‘See, I told you we could have done this.’ (Interview 6, Male, Denali)

All of the less dedicated drivers agreed that they felt some connection with other self-drivers, and that their activity was of a different, deeper level than travelers on packaged tours, cruises, or even those who travel in large, organized caravans, as well as from those who do not travel at all. Feelings of affinity with other travelers seemed to be largely based on vehicle type, however, such as with RVers feeling close to other RVers, and motorcyclists feeling close to other motorcyclists. These sub-cultures within the larger self-drive recreation market seemed to be fairly strong and developed, and
recreational conflict (Watson, 1995) could even be observed between different groups, such as with car drivers and motorcycle riders having animosity towards the drivers of large, slow-moving RVs that are difficult to pass on many Northern highways.

Identity with Activity

Many of the road-trippers interviewed had a strong sense of identity with their self-drive recreation, meaning that they are enthusiastic about their activity and may be more inclined to label themselves by their activity than other factors, such as job or position in life (Stebbins, 2007). As with most of the other elements, this sense of identity varied in degrees amongst the interviewees. Those most strongly identifying themselves were the full-time RVers: “Well, now that we are both retired, this is what we do. It is who we are. We are full-timers. That’s our job now. Sort of,” (Interview 20, Male, Whitehorse) and, “It’s very, very special because it’s not holiday anymore. It’s daily life,” (Interview 12, Female, Haines). Many others recognized self-drive recreation as an important component of their lives, but that other activities had precedence, such as: “Oh, I love my home. I always love to go back to it. We may drive a lot, but our farm and family are more important to us,” (Interview 15, Female, Soldotna). Others felt that traveling, but not specifically self-drive recreation, was their central recreational interest. Driving while traveling was just a method of getting to places: “It’s a means of transport to beautiful areas. We do a lot of hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park…in Denali,” (Interview 16, Male, Valdez).
Sense of Career

A sense of career (Stebbins, 1982), or a continuing history of participation, in self-drive recreation was strongly evident in many of the interviewees. As can be expected, those who had been participating in this activity for many years felt the strongest sense of career, as a family in a large RV commented, “40 years ago we started with a pop-up [trailer] and have been going ever since,” (Interview 6, Female, Denali). Similar to this, many other long-time self-drive recreation participants recognized an evolution and specialization (Scott and Godbey, 1994) of their traveling habits over the years, with the acquisition of more specialized vehicles frequently being seen as marker in the advancement of their careers:

I came back from Vietnam and she said ‘let’s buy a tent and camp’. Having just done that for a year, I wasn’t too thrilled with this and said ‘let’s buy a motorhome and camp.’ Well, we couldn’t afford a motorhome so we bought a tent trailer and started off with that. Then we bought a hard-sided trailer, camped in a van all over Europe while we were assigned there. Bought another trailer. Bought a gas motorhome, and then traded that on our diesel pusher motorhome. So it’s kind of been an evolution over the years, but after the first 6 months…we knew we loved it and that we going to keep doing it. (Interview 6, Male, Denali)

We progressed from a bigger tent to a small trailer. It had bunkbeds in the back for the kids. And we had that for 18 years. Then we went from a trailer to a small motor home. Then to a little bigger motor home. And then finally to this one. So it was a progression of comforts. (Interview 3, Female, Haines)

Life changes were also frequently seen as transition points in the evolution of self-drive recreation careers. Such life changes would result in more money and/or free time, for example: “Now that I am done with my post-grad program, I’m probably going to have more time to do this in the summers. I haven’t had that in probably the last four years,” (Interview 11, Male, Eagle River). Retirement and/or independent children were the most popular life changes described:
We stopped working to go traveling. We could have worked another 5, 6, 7 years… Just we said, okay, let’s stop working, we drive to Nepal… And we stopped working because the children were grown up and we could go because they are independent. (Interview 12, Female, Haines)

Before we were retired, they were strictly vacation things. And usually vacation to a relative. So it was strictly not a trip to go somewhere and enjoy ourselves. It was a “duty trip”. But now we’re retired, so we can travel. We’ve driven to see the space shuttle take off twice. We’ve been up to Yellowstone… (Interview 5, Male, Denali)

Interestingly, destinations visited were largely not seen as markers in the serious leisure career. Only those who traveled to the most difficult destinations, such as Prudhoe Bay up the 400-mile long primitive Dalton Highway, considered reaching such destinations as important moments, or “victories”, in their self-drive careers. Many interviewees described driving to basically the same familiar and much-enjoyed areas year after year, adding few new destinations that could be considered markers in their careers.

**Summary of Results**

Self-drivers who met all of the serious leisure criteria (Stebbins, 1982) were classified as serious leisure participants. Those who were lacking a sense of career yet meet the other criteria, with also possibly some lower feelings towards a unique ethos as well, were classified as project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2005). Following these criteria, 17 of the interviewees in this study were labeled as serious participants in self-drive recreation, and eight were project-based leisure self-drive travelers. Of these eight, half participated in traveling as a form of serious leisure, but whether or not such travel was by a vehicle they were driving was irrelevant to them. Thus, their road trip to Alaska can be viewed as a project-based self-drive trip that is part of a serious general travel leisure career. These results are summarized in Table 2.3.
Table 2.3. Levels of leisure dedication amongst interviewees.

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</table>
DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the qualitative interviews based upon the criteria established by Stebbins (1982, 2007), it seems apparent that self-drive recreation is capable of being classified as a serious leisure pursuit for some, and a project-based leisure pursuit for others, thus supporting the hypotheses. There clearly was variation in how seriously the self-drivers participated in their chosen activity, with several being clearly serious recreationists while others were more likely to be project-based leisure enthusiasts. Without a doubt, the five full-time RVer couples interviewed were not only participating in serious leisure, but they were shining examples of it. These couples have sold their homes and moved into their vehicles so that they can constantly pursue self-drive recreation. Few if any of the other examples of serious leisure in the literature (Stebbins, 2007) describe such an extreme dedication to a primary leisure activity. In addition to clearly being serious leisure devotees just by observation, all four couples met Stebbins six criteria for serious leisure (Stebbins 1982, 2007).

13 of the remaining 20 interviewees also met the criteria for participation in self-drive recreation as a serious leisure pursuit, though these cases were not always as clearly defined as the full-time RV portion. While this portion strongly agreed that there were durable benefits and a sense of career, agreement with the other elements, while still positive, was not always as obvious. This group was more likely to define perseverance as overcoming immediate problems, such as poor driving conditions or mechanical difficulties, rather than broader difficulties relating to the self-drive recreation lifestyle.
They would identify themselves as self-drive recreationists and agree that it was a primary recreational interest in their lives, but several also expressed that other interests, such as spending time with family and friends, were more important to them.

Two of the elements were especially difficult to identify, however this is likely due, at least in part, to the nature of self-drive recreation itself. First, many interviewees could not readily identify any effort they made through the use of skills or knowledge while participating in self-drive recreation. However, it would seem unlikely that the participants, especially the most specialized and committed, would not have them as this element has been shown to be strongly related to long-term involvement in an activity (Scott & Shafer, 2001). This may be because the simpler forms of self-drive recreation do not necessarily require special knowledge or training, and the skills used in it may not be as obvious as they are often gained in relation to other purposes. Self-drive recreation essentially only requires that one knows how to operate a vehicle, which in the developed world is an incredibly common skill that many may not consider requires any extraordinary effort. Helpful but not altogether necessary skills, such as map-reading, trip-planning and research, and budgeting are often gained in other portions of life and are then only later applied to self-drive recreation. Therefore, participants may not see these skills as indeed being special skills because they seem to be so commonplace. However, those who do not live in a Western developed nation may not have such abilities.

Additionally, another skill, if it can be considered as such, that many travelers described but did not attribute to being a special ability, was that of having the sense of adventure to embark on long-distance road trips. Many of those interviewed explained
how non self-drivers back at home had difficulty understanding how the interviewees could pack up for weeks or months at a time and travel to places thousands of miles away that they may have never been to before, especially if they were not on a guided tour. Although driving to Alaska had become familiar for many of those interviewed, with only eight of the 17 identified as being serious making their first trip to the North during this study year, such a trip was often considered dangerous, scary, etc., or at the least very unusual, by many of their acquaintances at home. While others would believe that an intense amount of effort would be required for participation in a trip to Alaska, the self-drive recreation participants themselves were mostly not aware of a need for much effort. Thus, this sense of “adventure”, “curiosity”, “wanderlust”, or whatever they defined it as might comprise a common skill or ability necessary for the effort of self-drive recreation, but one that is not readily apparent to even those who use it. This notion is further supported by the fact that some interviewees cited experiencing new cultures, places, and things as one of the lasting benefits of their activity. Such a common curiosity and sense of adventure contradicts the notion that participants in self-drive recreation are “psychocentric” and inhibited (Plog, 1973; D. Pearce, 1995; Burns & Holden, 1995; Rothman, 1998). The desire for independent exploration also further illustrates that self-drive recreation devotees are far more likely to seek to break Smith’s “tourist bubble” (1977) than many other types of tourists, and that they want to experience phenomena that are more authentic and less a part of a controlled tourist infrastructure. This sense of adventure also plays into the unique ethos or social world element of serious leisure, as these respondents similarly identified that such curiosity separates them from other tourists, and people in general. When pressed more on this topic, many agreed that it is
something that all self-drive recreation adherents have in common. Otherwise, and probably because of the largely solitary and highly independent nature of self-drive recreation itself, a *strong* sense of ethos was not described except for between drivers of some vehicle types, though most of the participants admitted to feeling at least some connection to other self-drive recreationists.

The remaining eight travelers who were interviewed did not meet all the criteria for serious leisure. Four could best be classified as pursuing travel as a serious leisure pastime, but not specifically self-drive recreation. Just one couple described themselves as simply being on a vacation, and did not see it as part of any sort of travel career. Interestingly, the remaining three interviewees were just beginning their self-drive travel histories and thus could not identify a developed career yet. One couple flew to Alaska and rented an RV, “To see what it is like. See if we like it—this lifestyle. So far it’s pretty nice. Maybe when we retire in a few years this is what we’ll do,” (Interview 19, Male, Denali). Another had just purchased a 5th-wheel trailer that year and was taking their very first long-distance driving trip, again with the hopes of continuing it when they retire within the decade (Interview 8). The third was an individual who had wanted to take another long road trip since the last one he was part of as a child, and just now was finally able to:

> We did go to Bryce Canyon and Zion park when I was probably 12. And that was pretty great. It was the only time that we had done it. I have siblings that prevented the fact...we never got to travel in a big group. So I got the benefit of the one time that we got to go somewhere, and it made an impression on me. So I always wanted to do more, just never had the chance. (Interview 11, Male, Eagle River)
As they had no career of self-drive recreation participation, at least not in the same sense of the other serious participants, these final eight interviews were considered to be the project-based leisure participants in the group, as they did illustrate the other five elements of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982, 2007).

**Relationship Between Serious and Project-Based Leisure**

It seems clear that there can be an evolution from project-based leisure into serious leisure in self-drive recreation. Several of the aforementioned project-based travelers were in the early stages of what could grow into a serious self-drive recreation lifestyle. The couples in interviews eight and 19 were taking their very first long-distance trips, and they hoped that if they enjoyed the activity enough that they could travel far more frequently when they retire in a decade. If such were the case, then this first trip would certainly serve as a marker, or identifiable moment of importance, in their serious leisure career (Kane & Zink, 2004). As Stebbins postulated, “Assuming the neophyte takes the plunge and launches a serious leisure career, the catalytic project is now reinterpreted as the initial step in that career” (2005; p. 10). So, should these couples find their project-based leisure trips to be enjoyable and are able to take more in the future, then perhaps in a decade or two one would be able to look back and note that these initial trips taken this year were that catalyst that lead to serious leisure adoption—thus an early marker in their serious leisure careers (Kane & Zink, 2004). Indeed, many serious travelers looked back and described early trips that were likely undertaken as project-based leisure long before they were able to become serious participants. “Before
we were retired, they were strictly vacation things. And usually vacation to a relative… But now we’re retired, so we can travel.” (Interview 5, Male, Denali), and the quote from interview 11 in the previous paragraph helps to illustrate this feeling.

Deep senses of enjoyment with project-based trips likely create a desire for more participation in travelers, and apparently once they are able to increase their available free time—such as through retirement—many of these travelers will then seek serious participation. Stebbins suspected this, although he also mentioned that such a desire for deeper adherence to a leisure activity may develop when “an individual finds in the project hidden talents and aptitudes fanned by a stronger desire to develop these…” (2005; p. 10). Such a notion of skills and abilities was not apparent in self-drive recreation, as noted in the discussion of the results for the effort based on knowledge, skill, and training element. However, despite this minor divergence, it appears from this study, and in support of the third hypothesis, that previous self-drive tourism trips undertaken as project-based leisure serve as landmarks in the leisure careers of those who now enjoy the activity as a serious pursuit.

Questions Raised

Although this study found that there can be an evolution from project-based to serious leisure, it also found evidence that perhaps there is far more to the notion of serious recreational involvement than can be adequately expressed in a simple dichotomy. Due to the nature of self-drive recreation, with its long uninterrupted periods
and great variation in frequency, many questions were raised about how serious leisure relates to such activities and furthermore, what the line between serious and project-based leisure might be, and if it is even accurate to express the division so definitively.

**Frequency of Participation**

First, there are issues raised by the frequency of participation in self-drive road trippers. Within the group of self-drive recreationists that was determined to be serious, there were some sizable differences. While the full-time RVers were constantly engaged in their self-drive recreation pursuit, most of the other travelers encountered only traveled for a few months, or even just weeks, out of the year, and usually all in just one trip. This could certainly be considered “occasional” as fitting the project-based leisure definition proposed by Stebbins, especially as he also recognizes annual activities as falling under this classification (2005). Yet for several reasons it does not seem correct to label these self-drive recreationists as project-based leisure participants. Though they may only take one trip a year, they are fully engaged in that trip for 24 hours a day, resulting in a considerable amount of time dedicated to their activity—possibly more than other serious leisure participants, such as kayakers (Kane & Zink, 2004), spend in a year. All but one of these self-driver groups bought a special vehicle, or at least a trailer, for their self-drive trips. This included some very substantial purchases for those who bought class-A RVs. Such a sizable appropriation of resources indicates extremely strong dedication to an activity, even if it is only undertaken once a year (Bloch, Black, & Lichtenstein, 1989). Also, although for many these trips are only taken in the summer, they are usually undertaken at regular intervals, albeit a year or two apart, and the participants saw each
summer spent traveling as another part in a long string of trips, indicating a sense of career. Thus, although the self-drive recreation participation is undertaken in what can appropriately be considered infrequent or occasional intervals, all of the elements of serious leisure are apparent, including the sense of career, and thus these participants were deemed to be engaged in serious leisure.

Another interesting case was a couple from Switzerland who were touring the world in their RV. They had devoted five whole years to this enterprise, after which they planned to return home and sell the RV. Although they had taken many trips in the past, and stated they would take many more in the future, only once would they undertake a full-time self-drive recreation trip such as this. They would be full-time RVers, but only for five years, after which they would stop with a distinct end-point to their activity. Since this is clearly a “one-shot” project as described by Stebbins (2005), it would seem to fit under the classification of project-based leisure. Yet, is this classification correct if the activity in question lasts five years? Is it proper to think of this couple as serious leisure participants as long as they are on the road, but as project-based once they stop? They illustrated all of the elements of serious leisure, and described their completed three years of travel concurrent with what would be expected from describing a serious leisure career (Stebbins, 1982). Could they better be considered project-based full-time RVers, but serious self-drive recreationists? For this study, this couple was classified as serious leisure participants as they met all the criteria, yet it remains a perplexing case because of their unusual situation.
Leisure Career

There are also issues with the concept of the leisure career and how past experience plays into project-based leisure. Three of the participants labeled as project-based are likely only such because they are just starting out in their leisure careers. This raises many questions about the line between serious and project-based leisure and the element of the leisure career. At what point does a career begin? Consider the case of the couple who had just purchased a large trailer with the intent of traveling more in the future. This couple had only taken one trip—the one they were on while they were interviewed—yet they expressed a desire to take more and had expended upwards of $20,000 to purchase a trailer that would allow them to. Such a costly purchase of equipment instrumental to the self-drive recreational experience strongly indicates an intention to be committed, as well as to relate, to this activity (Bloch et al., 1989; Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992). Yet, since they had no history of trips to produce a career, they could only be considered as project-based participants. How long of a history of participation is required before an activity can be considered a project-based leisure pursuit? Stebbins has not given an absolute answer on this. He has stated that a leisure career, “Needs time to take root and grow. Thus tourists do not become hobbyists simply by taking one or two cultural tours…The career of this hobbyist develops along the lines of accumulated knowledge and experience…,” (1996; p. 949), but did not elaborate on when such a career has rooted and grown enough to be considered fully developed. With the advent of the theory of project-based leisure, understanding at what point a career can be considered to have started is essential if an activity is to be identified as serious or project-based.
The Project-Based and Serious Leisure Relationship

Using the basic definitions and framework provided by Stebbins (2005), this research determined that self-drive recreationists to Alaska can indeed be separated into serious and project participants based upon the factors of frequency of participation and the presence of a developed leisure career. However, this research also found evidence to suggest that such a strict division may not be accurate in describing the differences in serious leisure involvement. The criteria for dividing participation into either serious or project-based leisure are subjective, and what one observer may deem as evidence of infrequent and occasional participation or the lack of a leisure career, another may not. Unless strict criteria are adopted, and this option seems remote given the subjective nature of leisure in the first place (Yoder, 1997), then it will continue to remain a subjective determination. It is not nearly as simple as the division between casual and serious leisure, where the two forms of leisure are dramatically different from each other, share few if any common elements, and thus can easily be dichotomized. As Stebbins noted: “During the current exploratory stage of research on serious leisure, seriousness is most effectively examined as a dichotomous quality, with casual or unserious leisure as its opposite,” (1982, p. 255).

Therefore, it would seem more appropriate to instead propose that serious leisure participation follows a continuum. At the lower end would be project-based leisure, and at the higher end would be full-time serious leisure participation, such as was observed in the full-time RVers encountered in this study. The more frequent and/or intense participation is in an activity, and the greater their past experience, the higher the participant would rate on the continuum. Such a sliding scale seems more appropriate
given the subjective nature of this topic, and would allow for the placing of levels of participation between the two forms of leisure dedication, instead of having to decide between one or the other. It would also allow for a smooth progression from project-based leisure to more full-time serious leisure, as recreationists might change in frequency of participation over time, and certainly would progress in the development of their leisure careers (Stebbins, 1992). This would negate the need to determine at what point project-based leisure becomes serious, as a specific marker or turning point would no longer need to be identified because there would be no set turning point from one to the other. A continuum between project-based and serious leisure also seems an acceptable option because Stebbins has made reference to the use of a continuum in his initial description of serious leisure and its relationship to casual leisure, noting that such a continuum could exist between the two:

Even today, nonetheless, there is evidence… to suggest that seriousness and casualness, as personal approaches to leisure, are merely the poles of a complicated dimension along which individuals may be ranked by their degrees of involvement in a particular activity. Hence, a more sophisticated, research-informed construct will likely abandon eventually this primitive categorical terminology for conveying continuousness (1982, p. 255).

If a continuum can exist between serious and casual leisure, which are much more different from each other than serious leisure is from project-based leisure, then surely a continuum can be used between project-based and serious leisure.

Further support for the appropriateness of a continuum in this situation can be found in the suggestion of a continuum in the construct of leisure specialization (Kuentzel & McDonald, 1992; Scott & Shafer, 2001), with a scale stretching from low specialization to high specialization. As mentioned before, specialization is closely
related to the theory of leisure commitment, with which serious leisure is extremely similar, if not one in the same. Thus, the use of a continuum in specialization might indicate that it would be fitting to use one with serious leisure as well.

**Further Research**

Further research is clearly needed on the new theory of project-based leisure. If project-based and serious leisure are to be viewed as a dichotomy, then Stebbins’ notion of occasional and infrequent (2005) participation in an activity should be further refined and defined, and then three questions raised by this research are immediately apparent: 1) Is there an absolute length of the interval between participation in an activity over which point it becomes occasional and infrequent? 2) Is there a participation-to-inactivity ratio that could better define project-based leisure, with the amount of time spent engaged in an activity compared to the length of time between such engagement?, and 3) How much participation is needed before a leisure career can be considered to have developed? If such concrete points cannot be established, however, and due to the varied and subjective nature of leisure (Yoder, 1997) it may be doubtful that they can be, then there most likely does not exist a true borderline between serious and project-based leisure, but rather it is more of a continuum based upon criteria that are open to interpretation. Therefore, more study is needed to examine this continuum and how differing levels of participation in serious leisure should be placed along it.
As a side note, this study also indicates that the full-time RV market of self-drive recreation participants may warrant further study. This group has been largely neglected in the literature, with no academic studies found on the recreational nature of the full-time RV lifestyle from the last two decades. In the early 1980s, the number of retirees living full-time in RVs was reported at 8 million (Guinn, 1980). While this seems a rather high estimate, even for today, it is still clear that full-timers are a sizeable market segment, and that it is likely growing as more and more baby-boomers are retiring. Their total immersion in their leisure pursuit presents a rare situation in recreation studies, and study of this group would doubtlessly provide many insights into the nature of leisure motivations, dedication, conflict, constraints, etc.

**CONCLUSION**

Based upon the criteria established by Stebbins and supported by many others (2007), self-drive recreation can clearly be identified as an activity that is undertaken by some participants as a form of serious leisure. It has also shown to be a project-based leisure pursuit for those who have not established a dedicated leisure career in it, and if there is adequate enjoyment with the project-based trips, then participation may evolve into serious leisure for some adherents. A few of the characteristics of self-drive recreation, especially the common pattern of relatively long periods of total immersion in the activity separated by months or even years of inactivity, have raised questions about the relationship between serious leisure and project-based leisure, as well as the notion of what constitutes a leisure career. While self-drive recreation was able to be classified using the established criteria, this was by no means a definitive classification. As the
criteria are open to much interpretation, such a classification is a far more subjective than objective conclusion. Another researcher could examine the same data and arrive at a different classification for many of the self-drivers interviewed in this study. Therefore, it seems that a deeper exploration of the criteria is needed if such classifications are to be made more objective, or, perhaps more appropriately, it would be better to view the relationship between project-based and serious leisure more as a continuum than a dichotomy. Project-based leisure might be placed at one end, with full-time serious leisure on the other. Various rates of participation would fall in between the two poles, and such a continuum would allow for some subjective variation in placement along the scale without the need to decide if one’s participation fell wholly in one category or the other.

This study has several scholarly implications. First, it provides support for Stebbins’ theory of project-based leisure (2005). It also proposes further areas where study is needed on project-based leisure as well as in serious leisure. Second, it provides some analysis of the complete dedication and immersion to a leisure activity demonstrated by full-time RVers. Such total dedication seems quite rare when compared to many of the other recreational pursuits that have been studied over the years (Stebbins, 2007). This research also adds to the growing body of literature on self-drive recreation, which had not been previously studied in a leisure context. It has revealed segmentation in the self-drive recreation market based upon dedication to the activity, as well as found evidence of shared characteristics common to many self-drive recreation participants. Some of these characteristics, especially the sense of adventure that seems to be required in long-distance road-trippers, contradict the assumption that all people who chose
drivable destinations over flyable ones are un-adventurous (Plog, 1973, 1990). This study also proposed a more uniform definition of exactly what self-drive recreation is in an effort to end the ambiguity and omissions found in the varying proposed definitions.

Aside from academic importance, this study also has some implications for tourism management agencies and businesses that wish to attract self-drive tourists. Long-distance self-drive recreation appears to be most popular with retirees, as can be expected from the considerable length of time most people dedicate to this activity. Retirees were also more likely to have large RVs or 5th-wheel trailers. Furthermore, many of those interviewed who were not yet retired expressed a desire, or at least an interest, in pursuing self-drive recreation with more dedication once they retired, and all full-time RVers described that they were in that same situation before they retired. It would therefore appear that agencies and businesses wishing to attract the self-drive market should do their best to cater to retirees. Long-distance travelers, especially full-timers, are able to be more discretionary with their travel itineraries, and many of those interviewed expressed that they like to remain very flexible. Thus, these travelers are more likely to make extended stays at locations where they feel most welcome, and therefore contribute far more money per person into the local economy than travelers who are just passing through.
REFERENCES


Orientation to Chapter 3

Chapter 3 has been written as a stand-alone article to be submitted at a later date for consideration for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This chapter has been crafted to address the following dissertation research questions and hypotheses:

RQ6: Can serious leisure devotion and/or project-based leisure devotion to a recreational activity be determined from quantitative data analysis?

H6: Both serious and project-based leisure devotion to a recreational activity can be determined from quantitative data analysis.
CHAPTER 3
AN EXPLORATION OF THE APPLICABILITY OF
QUANTITATIVE METHODS IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF
SERIOUS AND PROJECT-BASED LEISURE

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if quantitative methods were utilizable in documenting and classifying serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982) and project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2005). All previous research pertaining to whether or not recreational activities could be considered serious leisure have been performed using qualitative methods, and no published studies have ever examined project-based leisure. This study was performed using data from surveys administered to self-drive recreation participants at campgrounds in Alaska and the Yukon Territory in the summer of 2007, and then compared to results from concurrent qualitative interviews from the same group that confirmed self-drive recreation was classifiable as serious leisure for many interviewees and as project-based leisure for the others. Confirmatory factor analysis using structural equation modeling (Byrne, 2001) was employed to test survey items that were designed to correspond to one of the six elements of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007). Items were discarded until models with the highest goodness-of-fit indices were reached. Ultimately, the element of perseverance was discarded, resulting in models with high factor loading scores between the latent variables (serious leisure elements) and serious leisure itself. As this was an exploratory study and there was no previous work to consult regarding survey item construction, it seems likely that the failure of the perseverance element was
due to poor items and/or item wording, as well as possibly due to some unusual
characteristics of self-drive recreation. As indicated by the otherwise acceptable fits, it
would appear that quantitative study of serious and/or project-based leisure is feasible,
and if future studies were conducted to develop more suitable survey items, then such
methods could be used to augment and strengthen the qualitative ones already employed
(Creswell & Clark, 2007).

INTRODUCTION

The theory of serious leisure was first proposed by Stebbins in 1982, and has
since come under repeated and thorough research in well over two dozen studies
(Stebbins, 2007), many of which sought to identify participation in a particular
recreational activity as falling under the classification of serious leisure. Yet not one of
those published studies has employed quantitative means in this identification. Starting
with the initial proposal of the theory (Stebbins, 1982), there has been a decided
preference to use qualitative methods in the study of serious leisure. Such methods are
certainly appropriate, as they allow for a deep and involved study of the defining
recreational pursuits of numerous hobbyists (Stebbins, 1982), and the indication of the
lack of quantitative studies is not intended to imply a methodological lacking in the study
of this theory. Yet quantitative methods have several strengths over qualitative ones,
such as allowing for more ease when working with larger samples, being considered
more objective, and permitting more complex statistical analysis. Of course, quantitative
methods also have some drawbacks, especially as they do not allow for the in-depth and
more flexible interaction with subjects found in qualitative studies (Creswell & Plano-
Clark, 2007). A precedent for the use of quantitative methods in serious leisure theory would not only allow for an alternative means to study the theory of serious leisure, but it would also permit far more rigorous mixed-method studies (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Thus, establishment of quantitative methods for the study of this theory could be quite useful for researchers in this area.

Although the theory of serious leisure has been applied to many different recreational activities (Stebbins, 2007), it has not been used in the examination of self-drive recreation. In fact, no published studies have examined this seemingly ubiquitous form of tourism and recreation using leisure theory. Despite its apparent mass popularity in developed nations (Carson & Waller, 2002; Olsen, 2002), self-drive recreation has received sparse academic attention. The long amounts of time participants spend on self-drive recreation trips, especially the extreme cases of those who choose to live full-time in recreational vehicles (Guinn, 1980), suggest that this activity would probably fall under the definition of serious leisure for at least some of its adherents. Therefore, self-drive recreation could serve as a suitable context for the examination of the viability of quantitative methods for the study of serious leisure, as such a study would provide insights not only into serious leisure but also into the under-studied field of self-drive recreation. It is therefore the aim of this study to accomplish this by exploring through quantitative means if self-drive recreation can be classified as falling under serious leisure.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Serious Leisure

Stebbins (1997) has defined serious leisure as “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist, or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (p. 17). He sought to separate and examine those activities that, although they require considerable dedication, practice, skill, and time similar to occupations, careers, and work in general, are in fact undertaken as leisure activities.

Stebbins (1982) identified six elements that are all present in any activity qualifying as serious leisure. First is perseverance at the activity of choice, whereby participants must overcome occasional adversity in the pursuit of their recreation. Stebbins described that serious leisure therefore is not an “unalloyed joy,” (2001a), and pursuit of it sometimes can be difficult for adherents. The participants, however, are dedicated to such a degree that they continue on even when encountering adversity, and they may even gain a sense of accomplishment at surmounting problems. Second is the element of a sense of career, where participants’ “endeavors are enduring pursuits with their own histories and turning points, stages of achievement or involvement, and background continuity,” (Stebbins, 1982; p. 256). Recreationists engaged in serious leisure create and develop a history of their participation in an activity, and in retrospect can identify significant turning points that have affected their later participation. Third, serious leisure requires personal effort based upon skill, knowledge, or training.
Participants must exert themselves to some degree while using information and experience gained from engagement in their chosen activity. The acquisition of particular skills or knowledge can also mark turning points in the career aspect of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982).

Fourth, Stebbins (1982) described another of the identifying elements of serious leisure as being that the activity must result in durable benefits. Such benefits provide the impetus for participation, especially in the face of the adversity described in the first element. Stebbins identified eight such benefits in his initial theory proposal in 1982: self-actualization, self-enrichment, recreation or renewal, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, self-expression, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity. Self-gratification, or simply “fun”, can also be a benefit, but it is not unique to serious leisure. Over the 25 years following his initial proposal of the theory of serious leisure, Stebbins and others have realized that some activities may not provide all eight benefits, but they can still be considered serious. An example of this was liberal arts enthusiasm, which Stebbins defined as the “systematic and fervent pursuit during free time of knowledge for its own sake,” (1994; p. 175). This activity usually results in few or no lasting tangible benefits. The benefit of social interaction may also be absent from activities, such as liberal arts enthusiasm, though Stebbins suspects that participants will often experience at least some minor degree of connectedness with others engaged in the same pursuits no matter how independent in nature those pursuits are (2001b).
The unique ethos and social world that develops around an activity because of the subcultures created by participants is the fifth element of serious leisure. Stebbins explained that through some of the previous elements (gaining skills and knowledge, developing a leisure career, and sharing of benefits), serious leisure encourages the formation of social worlds amongst those with mutual experiences and interests in an activity (Stebbins, 1982). The sixth and final of Stebbins’ elements is that “participants in serious leisure tend to identify strongly with their chosen pursuits” (1982; p. 257). These participants are enthusiastic about their recreational activities, are usually willing to share their experiences in them with others, and they may be more inclined to consider or classify themselves by their recreational activities rather than by other identifiers, such as their occupations or social positions.

**Project-Based Leisure**

Project-based leisure is a new addition to serious leisure theory and was first published by Stebbins in 2005 to address those recreational activities which require considerable attention from their enthusiasts, yet have a discernable end. In Stebbins’ words, project-based leisure is “a short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time. It requires considerable planning, effort, and sometimes skill or knowledge, but for all that is neither serious leisure nor intended to develop into such” (2005; p. 2). In many ways, project-based leisure is essentially serious leisure minus the element of a leisure career. Adherents do not find an ongoing leisure career in the sense that a serious leisure undertaking would have. The element of ethos may also be missing or greatly
diminished due to the reduced levels of participation (Stebbins, 2005). Yet, all the other elements of serious leisure are present. Project-based leisure activities involve a high degree of involvement and dedication, and all are building up to a completion point. Though they may be repeated in another year or so, or even stopped for a while and then resumed later, these activities are not continuous nor intended to be so (2005). Therefore, unlike serious leisure, project-based leisure is not a central interest in a participant’s life. Some of its attraction may lie in the fact that it does not require the continuing dedication that serious leisure does, and thus can be more easily enjoyed by those people who have scarce time or other resources due to various possible demands in their lives (Stebbins, 2007).

To date, no published work has been performed on the theory of project-based leisure aside from Stebbins’ (2005) initial conceptual statement and another subsequent explanation of it (2007). Stebbins himself states that he has performed no studies on data to support or dispute this theory, and that he based the theory on “non-systematic observations of leisure in everyday life” (2005; p. 2). He hopes that his article will stimulate future exploration of this new theory so as to add to the understanding of leisure interest, “My object in this article is to present a conceptual framework detailed enough to focus inquiry, but at the same time open-ended enough to permit and encourage effective and, I hope, extensive exploration,” (2005; p. 1).
Self-Drive Recreation

Self-drive recreation, or “road-tripping”, is an incredibly popular activity in many industrialized nations (Carson & Waller, 2002; Olsen, 2002; Destination Analysts, Inc., 2006). With 88.3% of U.S. pleasure trips in 2006 estimated to have been taken in automobiles (Destination Analysts, Inc., 2006), this is clearly an important market, and in fact the North American propensity to take road trips in the summer is frequently cited as the reason for the increased demand, and thus elevated prices, of gasoline across the world between Memorial Day and Labor Day (Tse & Kirkham, 2006). Surprisingly, despite this popularity and economic impact, self-drive recreation has garnered precious little attention in peer-reviewed literature. Although it often received mention or was compared with other modes of tourism and recreation, it has only been in the last decade that the self-drive segment has gained dedicated attention from a handful of academics, especially in Australia (Carson et al., 2002). It is perplexing why a recreational activity of such popularity and global economic impact has gone so unstudied while other far less popular activities, such as whitewater rafting, have received proportionally far more attention (Fluker & Turner, 2000; Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Tarrant & English, 1996). This giant market of self-drive recreation clearly deserves increased academic attention.

The few studies performed on self-drive recreation have largely focused on tourism and understanding different segments within the self-drive market (Stewart et al., 1993; Prideaux, 2002, Pennington-Gray, 2003; Prideaux & Carson, 2003), trying to understand and/or find ways to manipulate the impact on areas affected by road travelers (Perdue, 1986; Laws & Scott, 2003; Lane & Waitt, 2007), or analyzing the use of particular routes (Mings & McHugh, 1992; Taplin & Qiu, 1997; Hardy, 2003, Olsen,
While such studies have often applied economic, geographic, and tourism theories to road-tripping, few if any of them have examined this recreational activity in the context of leisure theory. It is clear that there is a need for more research on self-drive recreation, especially from a leisure studies perspective.

**PURPOSE**

The aim of this study is to determine if serious leisure can be identified through quantitative means. Despite the myriad of studies performed on this theory, not one has attempted to determine quantitatively if an activity was indeed being undertaken as serious leisure activity. The preference for qualitative research in this field goes back to its origin, and such methods have certainly proven appropriate and successful (Stebbins, 1982; 2001). Stebbins (1992) explained that qualitative exploration allows researchers to enter the everyday world of their subjects and get the most detailed answers possible. Yoder (1997) noted that participant observation in the study of leisure has been argued for by past researchers on the grounds that such subjective methods are in line with the subjective nature of much of leisure. Though some have employed quantitative means to examine aspects related to serious leisure (Yair, 1992; Hastings et al., 1995), not one has used such methods to examine serious leisure itself. Additionally, none of the plethora of studies has stated reasons why quantitative methods may not be suitable for the study of this theory, but only explained why particular researchers preferred to use qualitative ones. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore this neglected method and its applicability to the study of serious leisure.
A study of the usefulness of quantitative means to the study serious leisure would serve several purposes. First, purely for the sake of enquiry, it would demonstrate that such methods can or cannot be employed. Second, such a study could make the theory of serious leisure more acceptable to those who may still harbor doubts about the validity of subjective qualitative methods. Third, a demonstration of quantitative methods in this area could pave the way for future quantitative studies. Qualitative methods often compensate for their depth of detail with small study populations, while quantitative methods would allow for far larger sample sizes (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007), and could also examine patterns and deviations within those populations that may not be apparent on a smaller scale or that would require an overwhelming amount of work if solely quantitative means were to be employed.

It was hypothesized, largely due to the fact that no studies had ever claimed that quantitative methods were inappropriate for the study of serious leisure, that quantitative methods would be found to be an applicable and useful means for the classification of a recreational activity as being undertaken as serious leisure. As project-based leisure has been theorized as essentially being serious leisure without the element of career and possibly some reduced ethos (Stebbins, 2005), it was also hypothesized that quantitative methods would be appropriate for its classification as well. More specifically, it is hypothesized that serious leisure can be expressed by the models presented in Figure 3.1, indicating that Stebbins’ (1982) six elements of serious leisure can be illustrated as latent elements that combine to form serious leisure.
METHODS

The researcher had extensive experience as an observer and participant of the tourism market in Northwestern Canada and Alaska, having been a resident of Alaska for 10 years and an avid self-drive recreationist with over 30,000 miles driven in this region. This knowledge aided the design and implementation of this study.

Study Site

This study was conducted during the 2007 summer tourism season in Alaska and the Yukon Territory through the use of self-administered surveys (Mehmetoglu, 2006). Surveys were distributed at several public and private campgrounds and RV parks throughout the region, including Yukon territorial and city campgrounds, Alaskan state
campgrounds, and Denali National Park. These locations comprised a convenience sample based upon facilities for which permission to survey was granted, though survey dates were randomly selected for those sites in mainland Alaska, and those in the Yukon and southeast Alaska were visited in a south-to-north pattern as the researcher drove up to Alaska, and then again in a north-to-south pattern as a random sample that included these remote and less-visited sites would have proven too costly. Identification of self-drive recreation participants was made by observing them near their vehicles as they were either camping in or near to them. All campers who could be found were approached, except for those who were clearly from Alaska and the Yukon. After a brief discussion of the project, surveys were left with the respondents so that they could fill them out during their stay, and they were collected either that same evening or the following morning.

**Survey Instrument**

The survey contained a variety of items, including ones designed to elicit information on demographics and serious leisure participation. Questions were multiple choice, including a set of 8-point Likert-type scales aimed at determining serious leisure participation where participants would be asked to rate their agreement for particular items on a scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 8 (strongly agree). This last set of 30 questions was pre-coded so that several questions would pertain to each of Stebbins’ (1982) six elements of serious leisure. For instance, the items “Road tripping sometimes has obstacles I must overcome” and “Road tripping can be difficult at times” were aimed at eliciting feelings towards the perseverance aspect of serious leisure. As there was no
precedent for appropriate questions in a quantitative study of serious leisure, these items were developed based largely upon the findings of previous qualitative studies aimed at classifying participation in varying activities as serious leisure, specifically Gibson et al.’s (2002) and Jones’ (2000) studies of sports fandom, Kane and Zink’s (2004) examination of kayakers, and the work of Stebbins (2007). Several additional items more specific to self-drive recreation were created based upon previous participant-observer experience of the author (following Yoder, 1997).

 Approximately 10% of participants were also qualitatively interviewed to provide a control against which the quantitative data results could be measured, as qualitative methods have been shown to be quite successful in the identification of serious leisure (Yoder, 1997). These interviews consisted of open-ended guided questions (Lane & Waitt, 2007) following a modified grounded-theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Potential interviewees were chosen through a regimen of theoretical sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) aimed at covering the widest possible range of self-drive recreation participants (Weiss, 1994).

**Data Analysis**

Analysis of the data was comprised of several steps. First, the items were divided into their respective serious leisure elements. An internal reliability analysis (Cronbach’s alpha) using the software Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15 was then performed to determine which items were most reliable in indicating their respective proposed latent serious leisure elements (Cronbach, 1951; Mehmetoglu, 2007). Such a reliability analysis indicates how well items that are expected to measure the same
constructs—in this case, the six elements of serious leisure—correlate with each other (Henson, 2001). As there were no previous studies employing such items in a similar quantitative fashion, it was assumed that at least a few of these original items might fail to be as reliable as the others. Items whose presence in each element lowered its alpha value were deleted so as to produce elements with the highest level of internal reliability possible.

Then, a correlation matrix was created using the remaining elements, and this was analyzed with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) through structural equation modeling (SEM) using LISREL 8.8. SEM was chosen as a seemingly appropriate method to test if the elements measured could be combined into serious leisure because this method combines confirmatory factor analysis with regression to determine the “goodness of fit”, or how well a hypothesized model matches the model obtained from the sample data (Byrne, 2001). CFA was chosen over exploratory factor analysis (Mehmetoglu, 2007) because the elements of serious leisure to which the individual items were to correspond were already theorized, and thus there already existed a factor model (Cole, 1987). There was a desire to examine if the data supported the theorized model of serious leisure elements, rather than to craft that model from scratch as other forms of factor analysis would do (Cole, 1987). SEM also appeared to be the obvious analytical tool because, although apparently never illustrated as such in the literature, the breakdown of serious leisure into its component elements naturally suggested a structural equation model, with the six elements indicating serious leisure acting as latent variables combining into the broader latent variable of serious leisure, and in turn being indicated themselves by their respective items (see Figure 3.1).
The goodness of fit indices determined from the results of the SEM analysis would “reflects the degree to which the covariances implied by the hypothesized model fit the actual sample covariances. The closer the fit, the better the proposed model accounts for the variance in the data,” (Son et al., In Press; p. 14), and therefore indicate whether or not the measured items accurately measured serious leisure, whose presence in self-drive recreation would have independently been determined by the qualitative interviews. There are numerous goodness-of-fit indices produced by the program LISREL (Widaman & Thompson, 2003), and 10 deemed appropriate were used in this study. First is the chi-square analysis. As chi-square is overly sensitive when the sample size is over 200 (Hayduk, 1987) and as it assumes perfect fit instead of close fit (Byrne, 2001), a ratio of chi-square/degrees of freedom is a more suitable measure, with a ratio of 3 or less considered acceptable (Carmines & McIver, 1981; Son et al., In Press). Two other popular measures are the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI). The former measures the relative level of variance and covariance in the model, similar to the multiple correlation squared of regression analysis, and a score above 0.9 is considered to be acceptable. The latter is corrected for sample size and the number of predictors (Cramer, 2007), with a score above 0.8 being acceptable (Cole, 1987). More recent examinations have indicated that these measures may be somewhat inadequate as they can be influenced by factors other than the model, such as sample size, so they are not as reliable as could be desired (Hu & Bentley, 1995; DeBlaere & Moradi, 2008).
An even more reliable measure of goodness-of-fit is the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which measures how the model fits the relation between pairs of variables, or the population covariance matrix. Scores below 0.05 indicate a good fit, but acceptability can be found as high as 0.08 (Brown & Cudeck, 1993). This is not to be confused with the root mean squared of the residuals (RMS), which directly measures differences between the reconstructed and observed correlations. A score of less than .1 is considered adequate (Cole, 1987). Another more reliable set of goodness-of-fit measures are incremental fit indices, which are so named because they reflect the incremental fit of the hypothesized model to the null model, which

Represents the hypothesis that the manifest variables are mutually independent and therefore reproduce zero, or null, covariances among all manifest variables. That is, in the traditional independence null model, the covariances among all manifest variables are constrained to zero, even though the variance and mean of each manifest variable are not constrained in any way and are therefore freely estimated. (Widaman and Thompson, 2003, p. 20)

Such incremental fit models are the normed fit index (NFI), non-normed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and the relative fit index (RFI), (Son, et al., In Press; Widaman & Thompson, 2003). Values greater than 0.95 specify a good fit, while those equal or above 0.90 indicate an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; DeBlaere & Moradi, 2008). Whatever model or models scored the most acceptable values for the most of the more reliable indices would be considered the optimal fit in this analysis.
RESULTS

Response rates varied dramatically by location. Some campgrounds contained only a handful of tourists when they were surveyed, such as those in the Yukon Territory. Others, such as Denali National Park, were frequently full with over 150 camping groups. Agreement to complete surveys was significantly lower in campgrounds where fishing opportunities were available, as campers were preoccupied with the salmon runs. In total, 372 individual self-drive groups were approached. Four groups were re-encountered at least one more time at locations far from their initial surveying, and were not counted again. A total of 290, or 78%, of those agreed to complete surveys; 229 of those were returned completed, representing 79% of returned surveys and 62% of overall travelers approached. This response rate is concurrent with those used in other similar studies (Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992). Several potential respondents did not feel that they possessed an adequate-enough proficiency in English to complete the survey and thus declined. All but one respondent were Caucasian, reflecting that this demographic appears to represent the vast majority of self-drive visitors to Alaska. The sole non-white group was East-Indian, and two groups of Asians declined to participate because of language difficulties.

Of all the surveys completed, 154, or 67.2%, were from Denali National Park’s Riley Creek campground. A t-test comparison was performed on the data, and it was determined that visitors surveyed at Denali National Park significantly differed with other respondents on only four items out of 120, so they were included in the whole. The differences were that Denali visitors were more likely to say that road tripping can be difficult, be on their first trip to Alaska, likely to spend less time in Alaska, and less
likely to motivated by fishing. These differences appeared logical, as Denali National Park is the premiere destination of Interior Alaska and it would likely be on the itinerary of first-time visitors, who due to inexperience with Alaska travel would probably see their trip as being more difficult. Differences in length of stay and the desire to fish were influenced by surveys conducted in the city of Soldotna, where the campground is situated on the most popular salmon-fishing river in Alaska. Surveys administered here revealed that it is not uncommon for visitors to spend a month or more at this site, and that it largely attracts visitors interested primarily in fishing. No fishing opportunities exist at the Riley Creek campground.

**Qualitative Analysis**

Twenty-five open-ended qualitative interviews were conducted in conjunction with this study as part of a larger research project (Chapter 2 of this dissertation), and from these interviews it was determined that participants in self-drive recreation could be classified as a serious leisure pursuit for 17 of the interviewees. These respondents all described experiencing Stebbins’ elements of serious leisure (1982). Five were full-time RV owners who lived a rather extreme example of serious leisure whereby they had sold their homes and now lived out of their vehicles so that they may pursue their chosen activity constantly and indefinitely. Eight of the remaining interviewees could be classified as project-based self-drive recreation participants because, although they illustrated five of the elements, they were lacking a sense of career in their activity. From these interviews, therefore, it was determined that self-drive recreation can be classified as a serious leisure pursuit based upon the established qualitative methods that have been
used in its study in the past (Stebbins, 1992). With self-drive recreation identified as a serious as well as a project-based leisure activity through qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis was then needed to determine if the same conclusion could be reached using this untested method.

**Reliability Analysis**

To determine reliability, Cronbach’s alpha test (Cronbach, 1951) was performed on each of the six elements of serious leisure. Items that had been pre-coded for specific elements were grouped together, and the analysis was performed using SPSS 15 to determine how well these individual items measured the latent variables. Three of the elements initially obtained high alpha values: identification with the chosen pursuit ($\alpha=0.757$), durable benefits ($\alpha=0.820$), and ethos ($\alpha=0.714$), and the analysis indicated that removal of any of the items would reduce the alpha values, so all of the items were retained. In the case of the durable benefits test score, 82% of the total score variance was reliable, and only 18% was attributable to error (Hensen, 2001). Nunnally (1978) stated that an acceptable Cronbach’s alpha for exploratory purposes is 0.70 or higher, and these three elements all came in higher than that lower limit. Perseverance initially received a value of 0.585—below Nunnally’s (1978) accepted limit (Hensen, 2001), but with the removal of two items, “my family emotionally supports my road trip dedication” and “road tripping makes me feel exhausted”, this value was raised to the more acceptable 0.706. The element of leisure career initially scored 0.715. Removal of “a life on the road appeals to me” and “I only like to take road trips like this infrequently” would raise the alpha value to an even more acceptable 0.806. Because the initial score
before removal of those two elements was still above Nunnally’s (1978) lower limit of 0.70, and because removal would leave only three items to determine for the element of career, it was decided to conduct further analysis using both the initial set as well as the more optimally-scored one.

Finally, the element of effort based on knowledge, skills, and abilities scored very low in its reliability rating. Initially, it had a low Cronbach’s alpha of 0.355, and even with the removal of two items, “planning trips is as much fun as taking them” and “road tripping can be done by anyone”, it could obtain only an optimal score of 0.496. This optimal value is still quite low, and its use results in only two items remaining to determine effort based on knowledge, skills, and abilities. The items in this element were the only ones that were not able to produce a reliable element. The five other elements all scored highly, indicating that their respective items correlated well and had a high reliability in measuring each element. Results of this reliability analysis are summarized in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1. Reliability analysis results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serious leisure element and original components (Italicized items subsequently removed)</th>
<th>Cronbach’s (\alpha) if individual item deleted</th>
<th>Cronbach’s (\alpha) if all items included</th>
<th>Highest possible revised Cronbach’s (\alpha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification with chosen leisure pursuit</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking road trips is my favorite activity</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to think of self as road tripper</td>
<td>.690</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify with other road travelers</td>
<td>.703</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive was the best part of this trip</td>
<td>.728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would rather road trip than work</td>
<td>.729</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify more with road tripping than work career</td>
<td>.759</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance in face of adversity</td>
<td>.585</td>
<td>.706</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Family emotionally supports road tripping dedication</em></td>
<td>.641</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping sometimes has obstacles to overcome</td>
<td>.450</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping is not always fun, but in general it is</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping can be difficult at times</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Road tripping can make me feel exhausted</em></td>
<td>.578</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort based on knowledge, skills, and ability</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Planning trips is as much fun as taking them</em></td>
<td>.378</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have grown in knowledge and skills used on trips</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Road tripping can be done by anyone</em></td>
<td>.437</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping requires certain know-how and skills</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durable benefits</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road trips make me feel better about myself</td>
<td>.789</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road trips make me feel refreshed and renewed</td>
<td>.784</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road trips make me feel productive/accomplished</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road trips make me feel like I have importance</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of road tripping outweigh any costs</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road trips make me feel like part of a group</td>
<td>.812</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethos</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I associate with other travelers while on the road</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road trippers have their own culture</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-road trippers do not understand me</td>
<td>.641</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All road trippers share some common elements</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure career</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>.806</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A life on the road appeals to me</em></td>
<td>.604</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I almost feel compelled to take road trips</td>
<td>.595</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see my road trip history as a series of victories</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each trip is like an accomplishment in a career to me</td>
<td>.579</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I only like to take trips like this infrequently</em></td>
<td>.681</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

After reliability analysis was performed, the items then underwent CFA to determine how well they fit into the model of serious leisure. Initially, all of the items that had been decided upon as reliable in the Cronbach’s alpha analysis were included in the model. Analysis in LISREL 8.80 however, indicated that the correlation matrix used was not positive definite, causing a flawed model (Hill & Thompson, 1978), and thus the resulting fit indices produced from such an analysis could not be reliable measures. A series of variations on the proposed serious leisure model were then run, with different models excluding different elements, items, and/or combinations of both. All of the items initially used in the reliability analysis were tested against each other in this process. The items that resulted in negative error variances which prevented the proper running of models (Chen et al., 2001) were removed in subsequent tests until three models were reached that were free of error.

In the end, it was determined that the element of “perseverance in the face of adversity” was a stumbling block as its component elements always produced matrixes that were not positive definite, preventing fit indices that even approached acceptability. This element was thus removed and model testing continued. It is believed that this element did not work with the factor analysis despite having relatively high reliability in the Chronbach’s alpha test because the alpha test was only comparing the individual survey items against others in the same element, and not against all of the other survey elements combined, as occurred in the factor analysis. Thus, while items would be reliable within the element, the element itself did not fit in with the larger model.
Likewise, while the items in the effort element may not have been very reliable when compared with each other, the effort item itself still fit with the factor analysis model and thus these items could then be included in the larger model.

With its removal, the highest fit indices were achieved with all of those items that had been determined reliable, with the re-insertion of “a life on the road appeals to me” and “I only like to take road trips like this one infrequently” from the career element. These items had initially scored very highly, with the Cronbach’s alpha being 0.715 if they were included, so although this was not the optimal reliability (a score of 0.806 was possible with their removal), it was still perfectly acceptable.

Thus, the only items from the initial survey that were excluded in the end to produce reliable models, in addition to all from the perseverance element, were “road tripping can be done by anyone” and “planning trips is as much fun as taking them” from the effort element and “I see my road trips as a series of victories” from the career element. Of three acceptable models, one ranked the highest (Figure 3.2) with acceptable scores for four of the 10 goodness-of-fit indices: chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (2.932), CFI (0.91), IFI (0.91), and RMS (0.075). This model had very high factor-loadings from the elements to serious leisure, representing strong correlations between the elements (comprised of the various survey items) and serious leisure.
Figure 3.2. Serious leisure structural equation model.
This SEM model of serious leisure shows strong factor loadings between the latent elements and the construct of serious leisure. Unique ethos, the element that had the lowest loading score, is still a very acceptable 0.77 (Son et al., In Press). Although many of the measured items score low factor loadings with their respective elements, such as “Each trip is like an accomplishment in a career” and “I only like to take trips like this one infrequently” for the career element scoring very low at 0.21 and 0.25, respectively, career itself scored a very high 0.93 to serious leisure, indicating a very good fit nonetheless.

After this optimal model had been reached for serious leisure, another was crafted for project-based leisure. As project-based leisure is theorized in essence to be serious leisure without the element of career, tests were initially performed identical to those for serious leisure, only with the career element removed. Just as with serious leisure, the element of perseverance proved a problem and had to be removed, resulting in three acceptable models. The optimal model contained all items except “road tripping can be done by anyone” and “planning trips is as much fun as taking them” from the effort element and of course the elements of career and perseverance. Again, three models proved acceptable, and one was more so than the others (Figure 3.3). This model scored in the acceptable range for six of the goodness-of-fit indices: degrees of freedom to chi-square ratio (2.827), NNFI (0.91), CFI (0.93), IFI (0.93), RMS (0.07), and AGFI (0.8). This model also had very high factor-loadings from the elements to project-based leisure, indicating a strong correlation. The six positive-definite models and their goodness-of-fit scores are summarized in Table 3.2.
Figure 3.3. Project-based leisure structural equation model.

- Road trips make me feel productive/accomplished
- Identify more with road tripping than work career
- The benefits of road tripping outweigh any costs
- Taking road trips is my favorite activity
- Road trips make me feel like I have importance
- Would rather road trip than work at job/career
- Road trips make me feel like part of a group
- Drive was the best part of this trip
- Road trips make me feel refreshed and renewed
- Tend to think of self as road tripper
- Road trips make me feel better about myself
- Identify with other road travelers
- Road trips make me feel like I have importance
- Identify more with road tripping than work career
- Road trips make me feel like part of a group
- Have grown in knowledge and skills used on trips
- Road trips make me feel like I have importance
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Road tripping requires certain know-how and skills
- All road trippers share some common elements
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Drive was the best part of this trip
- Road trippers have their own society
- Identify with other road travelers
- Road trips make me feel like I have importance
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Road tripping requires certain know-how and skills
- All road trippers share some common elements
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Drive was the best part of this trip
- Road trippers have their own society
- Identify with other road travelers
- Road trips make me feel like I have importance
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Road tripping requires certain know-how and skills
- All road trippers share some common elements
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Drive was the best part of this trip
- Road trippers have their own society
- Identify with other road travelers
- Road trips make me feel like I have importance
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Road tripping requires certain know-how and skills
- All road trippers share some common elements
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- Drive was the best part of this trip
- Road trippers have their own society
- Identify with other road travelers
- Road trips make me feel like I have importance
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Road tripping requires certain know-how and skills
- All road trippers share some common elements
- Non-road trippers do not understand me
- Drive was the best part of this trip
- Road trippers have their own society
- Identify with other road travelers
With the removal of career, the factor loadings were generally a little higher in the project-based leisure SEM model, with high factor loadings between all of the latent elements and project-based leisure itself, and higher scores for the measured items.

**Table 3.2. Goodness of fit scores for acceptable structural equation models.** Acceptable index values are in **bold**. Best-fitting models thus used for further analysis are in *italics*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goodness-of-Fit Index (acceptability)</th>
<th>Serious Leisure Models</th>
<th>Project-Based Leisure Models</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In: All P, C, and E&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Out: P</td>
<td>Out: P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X²/Df: (&lt;3)</td>
<td>2.679</td>
<td>2.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA (&lt;.08)</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMS (&lt;.1)</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI (&gt; .9)</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNFI (&gt; .9)</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI (&gt; .9)</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>I FI (&gt; .9)</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFI (&gt; .9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFI (&gt; .9)</td>
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<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI (&gt; .8)</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>P = Perseverance element, C = Career element, and E = Entire effort based on knowledge, etc. element.

**DISCUSSION**

The hypotheses were partially supported by the results from this study. Acceptable structural equation models were created to represent serious leisure and project-based leisure; however these models required the removal of one of Stebbins’ elements of serious leisure (1982): perseverance in the face of adversity. The necessary removal of this element to allow LISREL 8.80 to properly evaluate the models resulted in an imperfect model. However, five out of the six elements resulted in fairly high factor...
loadings, indicating that the model proposed in this study is indeed probably not far off the mark at all. From the findings of this study, it would appear that even though it was not successfully achieved here, it is possible and likely that serious and project-based leisure devotion to a recreational activity can be determined from quantitative data analysis. Likewise, project-based leisure also came close to identification through quantitative means, with four out of five of its examined elements showing high correlation.

While confirmatory factor analysis methods were used in this study instead of exploratory ones, it should not be forgotten that this study was still an exploration of the possibility of the applicability of quantitative methods to serious leisure identification. There were bound to be imperfections, as no such study had been described before in the literature, and especially because there was little precedent for the items evaluated. These items were crafted for this study based largely on qualitative questions asked in previous studies (Gibson et al., 2002; Jones, 2000; Kane & Zink, 2004; Stebbins, 2007) and at their best were merely estimates of questions appropriate to elicit indication of serious leisure participation. As no study similar to this had been performed on self-drive participants, there was no way to know exactly how to craft such questions for this group prior to the study. Some of the survey items could be expected to not perform as well as others, as indeed was the case. These faulty survey questions may have asked about conditions that did not accurately measure their respective elements, as likely may have happened in the case of the element of “effort based on knowledge, skills, and abilities” as only two items proved reliable for that element. From the qualitative interviews, for instance, it became clear that many respondents had not identified or considered that
there was a need for knowledge or skills in self-drive recreation, and few initially had thought of their activity as requiring much effort. Listings of particular skills needed in self-drive recreation elicited from the qualitative interviews, as well as areas where effort is required such as in being away from home or independently traveling in unknown regions, could be addressed more specifically in the survey items in the future. The wording of certain items also may have been perceived differently by respondents than was expected, and items that were intended to correspond to particular elements may indeed not have.

In future research, all individual items should be re-examined based upon the findings from this study. Clearly, the items used in an attempt to examine perseverance should be re-worded or replaced, and then this element should be re-tested to see if a model can be found that incorporates all six elements. It may also be useful to examine such quantitative methods in the context of other recreational activities. During this study, it was observed that self-drive recreation has some rather unique characteristics that set it apart from many other leisure activities, such as the common pattern of several weeks of intense participation separated by a year or more of inactivity and the considerable funds (commonly ranging from $30,000 to over $100,000) that many participants expend on purchasing recreational vehicles and trailers. These characteristics had not been thoroughly addressed, if at all, in the literature pertaining to this activity (Guinn, 1980; Carson et al., 2002). While the qualitative portion of this study did identify this activity as a serious leisure pursuit for many participants, and its nature did result in it being identified as project-based leisure for the rest, perhaps a more
conventional activity would be better suited for the exploration of the suitability of quantitative methods. Ideally, such an activity could be taken from the growing list of those that have already been identified as having serious adherents, such as competitive bass fishing (Yoder, 1997), sports fandom (Gibson et al., 2002), or kayaking (Kane & Zink, 2004). 

Finally, this study is highly applicable to serious leisure theory. First, it has given support to the theory of project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2005), which has previously been un-examined in the literature. Qualitatively, project-based leisure was shown to be a measurable phenomenon, and it came close to being measurable through quantitative means as well. Second, this is apparently the first attempted application of quantitative methods to the identification of either serious or project-based leisure, and it is hoped it will spur additional studies along this line. If quantitative methods were shown to be effective, then they could serve to support and strengthen the qualitative methods commonly employed (Stebbins, 1992). In addition to serious leisure theory, this research also has helped shed some light on self-drive recreation—which has been neglected in the past (Carson & Waller, 2002)—particularly by examining it through a leisure perspective instead of under its usual tourism or economic categorization. Self-drive recreation was shown to be a leisure pursuit that can receive unusually high dedication from its participants that can reach extremes of complete and indefinite immersion in the activity, which is an aspect of self-drive recreation that has not been examined in decades (Guinn, 1980) but would seemingly be gaining importance as millions of baby-boomers retire and many adopt full-time RV lifestyles.
CONCLUSION

Although identification of self-drive recreation as a serious and project-based leisure pursuit was made using qualitative means, it was not entirely achieved through quantitative ones. The high factor loadings and acceptable scores in several goodness of fit models indicate that there is promise for quantitative methods in the study of serious leisure, however, and it seems more likely that quantitative means were not successful in this particular study due to issues with certain items in the survey instrument rather than any inherent incompatibility of quantitative methods with serious leisure study. With five out of six elements of serious leisure acceptably validated through confirmatory factor analysis, and four out of five elements of project-based leisure, this study shows that such methods are probably quite applicable, and that future work that corrects the few errors in this exploratory study will in all likelihood meet with success.
REFERENCES


Orientation to Chapter 4

Chapter 4 has been written as a stand-alone article to be submitted at a later date for consideration for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This chapter has been crafted to address the following dissertation research questions and hypotheses:

RQ3: What are the differences between those who undertake road-tripping seriously and those who pursue it as project-based leisure?

RQ5: What factors, motivations, and conditions may lead to the adoption of a project-based leisure undertaking as a serious one, specifically in the area of self-drive recreation?

H2: The differences between those who undertake self-drive recreation as serious leisure and those who pursue it as project-based leisure will be related to different amounts of resources such as time and money, constraints from obligations such as family and work, and additionally identity with the activity. Serious leisure road trippers will have more resources and less obligations than project-based ones.

H3: Enjoyment of the self-drive recreation experience will be a primary motivation in stimulating the desire for adoption of the project-based activity as a serious one.
H4: Acquiring greater resources such as time and money and reducing obligations such as work and family will be the principal factors that allow the adoption of project-based leisure to develop into serious leisure.
CHAPTER 4
AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
PROJECT-BASED LEISURE AND SERIOUS LEISURE:
THE CASE OF PARTICIPANTS IN SELF-DRIVE RECREATION TRIPS TO ALASKA

ABSTRACT
This research was aimed at examining Stebbins’ 2005 theory of project-based leisure with empirical evidence, as well as at eliciting information about the relationship between this new theory and Stebbins’ older, more refined one of serious leisure (1982). Of particular interest were motivations that might spur project-based recreationists to become serious ones, and the constraints that may keep them from doing so. Quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews were administered to self-drive recreation participants in Alaska and the Yukon Territory during the 2007 summer tourist season. Respondents were classified as participating in serious or project-based leisure based on their histories of previous trip numbers and frequency. Answers from each group to items pertaining to enjoyment, identity with the activity, constraints, and demographics were compared. Results showed that serious self-drive recreationists tended to be significantly older and had a higher rate of retirement, indicating that time is a constraint preventing project-based drivers from becoming serious. Serious travelers also had higher levels of identification with their activity. Both groups had very high levels of enjoyment. It was also found that early trips taken as project-based leisure often serve as introductions to the activity, and that if enjoyment is high, then as participants acquire more free time they
are likely to become serious leisure adherents to the same activity. This study adds support to Stebbins’ theory of project-based leisure (2005), as well as provides evidence useful to tourism marketers that increasing enjoyment in younger, infrequent travelers may reap dividends in the future as such satisfied tourists are likely to become more frequent repeat customers once they retire.

**INTRODUCTION**

Stebbin’s (1982, 2007) theory of serious leisure is a well-established and tested concept of leisure involvement that has been pondered and confirmed by academics for over 25 years. It has been refined and amended over time, but its essential elements have remained unchanged. One recent amendment to this theory—project-based leisure—was introduced by Stebbins in 2005. Project-based leisure is essentially an activity that has all of the involvement of a serious leisure undertaking, yet is a one-time or occasional enterprise. Its pursuit does not continue indefinitely as serious leisure does. Project-based leisure is a logical extension of serious leisure theory, yet its existence has only been based upon observations and has not been empirically supported with qualitative or quantitative data. There are also questions about the relationship between project-based leisure and its parent theory of serious leisure. For instance, is project-based leisure similar but distinct from serious leisure, or are the two somehow connected (Stebbins, 2005)?

Self-drive recreation, particular long-distance self-drive recreation, presents an interesting framework for the study of this relationship. Recreational travel by automobile has many variations, and thus enjoys differing levels of participation. While
millions of Americans have doubtlessly taken a road trip to visit relatives, go to the beach, or see an amusement park, a smaller yet still sizeable fraction repeatedly, or even constantly, take to the road for extended multi-destination travels. No published research has explored how these travelers become so dedicated to the activity, as well as if there is an evolution from less serious, project-based road trips to the more serious full-time traveling.

This study first examines the new theory of project-based leisure and seeks to determine what role and to what degree, if any, the undertaking of a project-based leisure pursuit may have in the formation of a serious leisure career by examining the activity of self-drive recreation. Second, this research also seeks to determine what factors, motivations, and conditions may lead to the adoption of a project-based leisure undertaking as a serious one, again specifically in the area of self-drive recreation.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Serious Leisure and Project-Based Leisure**

Serious leisure was first proposed by Stebbins in 1982, and he has since refined its definition to “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist, or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (1997; p. 17). It requires substantial effort on the part of the participant, and contrasts with casual leisure, which Stebbins described as an “immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it” (199; p. 18). According to Stebbins’ further descriptions of serious leisure
(2007), there are six elements that must be present in order for a recreational activity to be considered serious: an identification with the activity, a unique ethos surrounding it, benefits, perseverance, a sense of career in the undertaking, and personal effort based on knowledge, skill, or training. Serious leisure therefore involves a recreational activity into which participants throw a considerable amount of their time, energy, and resources. It is an on-going passion that a person follows for years, and while it may have some difficulties associated with it, in the end the benefits gained from engagement outweigh the costs.

In his initial conceptual statement of serious leisure in 1982 (p. 255), Stebbins stated,

> During the current exploratory stage of research on serious leisure, seriousness is most effectively examined as a dichotomous quality, with casual or unserious leisure as its opposite. Even today, nonetheless, there is evidence... to suggest that seriousness and casualness, as personal approaches to leisure, are merely the poles of a complicated dimension along which individuals may be ranked by their degrees of involvement in a particular activity. Hence, a more sophisticated, research-informed construct will likely abandon eventually this primitive categorical terminology for conveying continuousness.

Yet, for the first two decades of the discussion and research on this topic, all leisure was generally held to be classifiable as either serious or casual leisure. The dichotomy prevailed, and no research was performed on instances where elements of both may be present. Stebbins himself even seemingly moved away from considering anything more than a dichotomy, and at one point explained that casual leisure could be “defined residually as all leisure not classifiable as amateur, hobbyist, or career volunteering,” (2001; p. 305). Four years later, however, Stebbins reversed this thinking when he proposed his new theory of “project-based leisure” (2005; p. 2), which he defined as a short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time. It requires considerable planning, effort, and sometimes skill or knowledge, but for all that is neither serious leisure nor intended to develop into such.
Stebbins gives examples of project-based leisure as being special event volunteering, preparing for birthday or holiday celebrations, or building an ornamental stone wall in one’s back garden (2005), though a myriad of other examples could likely be found with reflection. All such activities involve a high degree of involvement and dedication, and all are building up to a completion point such as the arrival of the holiday celebration or the final stone being laid in the backyard wall. Though they may be repeated in another year or so, or even stopped for a while and then resumed later, these activities are not continuous nor intended to be so (2005).

Stebbins described two types of project-based leisure based upon the frequency of undertaking the projects: one-shot projects and occasional projects (2007). The former are engaged in only once, after which the activity is not repeated. The latter happen repeatedly, but with significant gaps of time between the finish of one project and the start of the next that provides a defined independence to each project. Thus, unlike serious leisure, occasional projects are not continuous undertakings. Although serious leisure pursuers may indeed engage in numerous projects in their leisure undertakings, such as partaking in specific events such as battle re-enactments (Mittelstaedt, 1995; Hunt, 2004) or dog shows (Baldwin & Norris, 1999; Gillespie et al., 2002), these individual events can be viewed as markers in leisure careers (Kane & Zink, 2004) where each event is another step in a continuing leisure vocation. When there is no sense of a connectedness between the discrete events, then those events are undertaken as project-based leisure (Stebbins 2005, 2007).
To date, no work has been published on the theory of project-based leisure aside from Stebbins’ (2005) initial conceptual statement and another description of it in 2007. Stebbins himself states that he has performed no studies on data to support or dispute this theory, and that he based the theory on “non-systematic observations of leisure in everyday life” (2005; p. 2). He hopes that his publication will stimulate future exploration of this new theory so as to add to the understanding of leisure interest, “My object in this article is to present a conceptual framework detailed enough to focus inquiry, but at the same time open-ended enough to permit and encourage effective and, I hope, extensive exploration,” (2005; p. 1).

**Self-Drive Recreation**

Although specific definitions vary (Prideaux et al., 2001; Olsen, 2002; Scott, 2002), self-drive recreation, or “road-tripping”, is essentially travel for pleasure that takes place in a vehicle driven by a member of the party who is also partaking in the recreational trip as well. This distinguishes it from travel by road that takes place in a vehicle driven by someone who is working, such as in a bus or tour coach. The self-drive tourism market is extremely large, especially in some developed countries. Although figures vary on the rates of participation, all illustrate that self-drive tourism is a decidedly popular activity. Estimates of the percentage of road trips taken by Australians vary from 70% up to 80% of all the trips taken in the country (Carson & Waller, 2002; Olsen, 2002; Prideaux & Carson, 2003). A study by Destination Analysts, Inc. (2006) of a sample of Americans who traveled for leisure in the past 12 months
found that 88.3% of them traveled by automobile. Road-tripping is essentially as old as the automobile itself, and widespread mass-acceptance of this activity in the United States coincided with the introduction of the Ford Model T in 1908 (Hugill, 1985; Rothman, 1998).

Despite the popularity and longevity of self-drive tourism, the topic has only recently begun to be studied in-depth and researchers are only starting to gain an understanding of it. There is a recognized need for more academic attention, especially given the popularity of the activity and the economic, social, and cultural impact that it has (Carson & Waller, 2002; Prideaux & Carson, 2003). The few studies performed on self-drive tourists have largely focused on understanding different segments within the market (Pennington-Gray, 2003; Prideaux, 2002; Prideaux & Carson, 2003), and trying to understand and/or find ways to manipulate the impact on areas affected by road travelers (Perdue, 1986; Laws & Scott, 2003; Lane & Waitt, 2007). Although such studies have often applied economic, geographic, and tourism theories to road-tripping, few if any have examined this recreational activity in the context of leisure theory. It is clear that there is a need for more research on self-drive recreation, especially from a leisure studies perspective.

**Serious/Project-based Leisure and Self-Drive Recreation**

As would be expected from such a massive group of participants, the self-drive tourism market is highly varied (Olsen, 2002; Hardy, 2003). Self-drive tourists have been divided by their reasons for travel (Prideaux et al, 2001; Laws & Scott, 2003); destinations and route choices (Lane & Waitt, 2007); demographics (Prideaux, 2002);
lifestyle (Hardy, 2003); type of vehicle, length of time away from home, and accommodation preferences (Prideaux & Carson, 2003), among other reasons. Such a large and varied group of participants would also likely contain varying degrees of commitment to and participation in the activity, as constraints (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991) related to lifestyle and demographics would dictate in part how dedicated one could be to road tripping. Those with more free time, less social or family obligations, and/or more money, for instance—or those better able to negotiate such constraints (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993)—would be able to participate in their chosen leisure activity to a greater degree than others would, creating variations in the frequency and length of trips, and thus, the ability of the activity to be classified as serious leisure.

Long-distance self-drive recreationists obviously require considerable planning for their trips to be successful. Those who take such road trips are deeply involved with their activity for the duration of their trip. For many, this involvement is finished when they arrive back home. Such concentrated participation in a self-drive trip with a distinct ending point seems at first glance to fit the theory of project-based leisure (Stebbins 2005, 2007). However, for a noticeable fraction of road-trippers, the leisure involvement extends beyond single trips. The extreme of this group are those—many of whom have purchased motor homes (i.e., recreational vehicles or “RVs”)—that follow a life of fairly continuous travel with no permanent home (Full-Time RVer, 2008; Guinn, 1980; Moeller & Moeller, 1998; Russell & Russell, 2007). Those who adopt such a nomadic lifestyle would be far more likely to fit the mold of serious leisure adherents than project-based
leisure ones. With further study, more of the elements of serious leisure could be identified and empirically measured in self-drive recreation and it could come to be classified as such for its strong adherents.

PURPOSE

To date, there is no published work on the theory of project-based leisure aside from Stebbins’ 2005 initial conceptual statement and a later further explanation of it (Stebbins, 2007), so there has been no academic inquiry offering additional insights into the theory, let alone empirical support either for or against it. Serious leisure theory itself, on the other hand, has been applied to a plethora of different recreational pursuits (Stebbins, 2007). Stebbins himself states that he has performed no studies on data to support or dispute this theory, and that he based the theory on “non-systematic observations of leisure in everyday life” (2005, p. 2). Therefore, there is clearly a need for the empirical examination of this subject. One particular area of interest is the relationship that project-based leisure has to serious leisure. Stebbins (2005), in his introduction to the theory of project-based leisure, noted that in some cases there may be a connection between this limited form of leisure and a more indefinite career in serious leisure:

Perhaps it happens at times that, even if not intended at the moment as participation in a type of serious leisure, the skilled, artistic, or intellectual aspects of the project prove so attractive that the participant decides, after the fact, to make a leisure career of their pursuit as a hobby or an amateur activity (p. 3)… Some people may, as a result of undertaking their leisure project, discover that it or part of it is highly fulfilling and that they would therefore like to continue with it as serious leisure, (p. 10).
Additionally, if project-based leisure can indeed evolve into serious leisure, at what point does one become the other? Is there an upper limit on the number of occasional projects in a given time, or a minimal amount of time between them, beyond which project-based leisure becomes serious? Or does the transformation occur regardless of the regularity of engagement, but rather when individuals develop a sense of career in their leisure undertaking?

Clearly, there is a need for more research both to find support for Stebbins’ project-based leisure, as well as to craft a deeper understanding of it and its relation to its parent theory of serious leisure. Improved comprehension of project-based leisure will not only satisfy academic inquiry into the nature of leisure, but will likely also have real-world application. Stebbins (2005) believes that project-based leisure can be an important part of an “optimal leisure lifestyle” (2000) that provides for a sense of well-being through a managed use of free time with an emphasis on one or more deeply absorbing and satisfying pursuits complemented with casual leisure (Stebbins, 2007). Project-based leisure can be used as an interstitial activity to fill in space between serious leisure and non-leisure obligations, much as casual leisure can. However, as project-based leisure is more substantive than casual leisure and carries with it the benefits of serious leisure, it can provide a more rewarding experience (Stebbins, 2005). Project-based leisure can also be ideally suited for people who do not have much time at their disposal with which to engage in serious leisure, such as those with heavy workloads or family obligations, but who still want to engage in some activity that they would find
more fulfilling than mere casual leisure (Stebbins, 2007). Finding support for this theory, therefore, can lead to a better understanding of the management of free time, and thus better mental health.

As mentioned previously, self-drive recreation is also an area that has received scant academic attention and is decidedly in need of more (Carson & Waller, 2002). Whereas insights into serious and project-based leisure may have higher-level applications and benefits that can eventually trickle down to all, insights into road trips can have direct effects on peoples’ daily living. One important reason for the need for a further understanding of self-drive recreation is the economic impact it can have, especially on remote regions and communities that depend upon participants for a significant portion of their income (Laws & Scott, 2003). Alaska, for example, receives about 125,000 self-drive tourists across its borders each summer (Niziol, 2006). This number may seem insignificant compared to other destinations, yet it is comparable to nearly 20% of the Alaskan population of approximately 640,000 residents (State of Alaska, 2007). Such economic effects are disproportionately more important to small, isolated towns that lack other sustainable economic activities besides road tourism (Laws & Scott, 2003). Understanding the motivations, factors, and limitations of participants of self-drive recreation, particularly those that affect how they travel and that can be possibly manipulated by destinations, could be beneficial to communities seeking to strengthen their road tourism position.

Based upon the assumption that a long-distance road trip, such as one to Alaska, would be classified as at least project-based leisure because of the substantial amount of commitment and involvement, and that for many such a trip is actually part of a larger
serious leisure career, then long-distance self-drive recreation appears to be an
appropriate context in which to study the relationship between serious leisure and project-
based leisure. Each can serve as a context for deepening the understanding of the other,
as serious and project-based leisure theory can be applied to long-distance self-drive
recreation to gain insights into the dedication of the participants, just as the relationship
between perpetual and infrequent road-trippers can provide a context for understanding
any possible connection between serious and project-based leisure. Such research will
also provide much-needed insights into the decidedly small body of knowledge related to
self-drive tourism (Carson & Waller, 2002), specifically pertaining to the previously un-
examined area of the evolution of leisure commitment among self-drive recreation
participants.

It is hypothesized that the differences between those who undertake self-drive
recreation as project-based leisure and those who pursue it as serious leisure will be
related to different amounts of resources such as time, money, freedom from obligations,
as well as increased enjoyment and identification with the activity. Those who undertake
self-drive recreation as serious leisure will thus be equal or greater to project-based
recreationists in the areas of more resources, less obligations or leisure constraints
(Crawford et al., 1991), and greater identification with the activity. Furthermore,
enjoyment of the self-drive recreation experience will be the primary motivation in
stimulating a desire for the adoption of project-based leisure as a serious leisure career,
and the acquisition of greater amounts of money, free-time, etc. will allow for this
adoption. This hypothesis is supported by Pearce’s discussion of constraints to travel,
“Like a career at work, people may start at different levels, they are likely to change
levels during their life-cycle and they can be prevented from moving by money, health, and other people,” (1993, p. 125). The previous hypotheses all are derived from Stebbins’ pondering on the concept of project-based leisure from his introduction of the theory (2005).

METHODS

Having been a resident of Alaska for 10 years, and an avid self-drive recreationist, the author had extensive and in-depth knowledge of the region and the activity that lent itself to the formulation and execution of this study. He has driven every highway in Alaska at least once—often many times—and has been on nearly all the roads in the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia as well. The author also has extensive contacts, both personal and professional, in the Alaska State Parks, Alaska Department of Fish Game, city governments of Anchorage, Juneau, and Whitehorse, and Alaskan offices of the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Border Patrol that have provided him deeper insight into the self-drive tourism market in this region. This knowledge, combined with ample experience, allowed for the informed crafting of this self-drive recreation study.

Survey

Questionnaires were handed to self-drive participants staying at public campgrounds and private RV parks throughout Alaska and the Yukon Territory during the middle of the mid-May to mid-September 2007 summer tourist season. A convenience sample of survey locations was used, based upon those sites where
permission to conduct the study was obtained. Survey dates were randomly selected. Campgrounds and RV parks were chosen as the survey locations for several reasons. Personal experience in conducting similar recreational studies has indicated that tourists are most willing to discuss their experiences when they have settled down for the evening, and thus contacting them when they are at rest is more successful than attempting to intercept them during their travel day. Other studies of self-drive recreation participants in remote areas have also reached the same conclusions (Lane & Waitt, 2007). The extended summer sunlight of the North also made filling out the survey in the evening much easier for respondents, and the open nature of campgrounds and RV parks provided for easy identification of self-drive recreation participants. As they would almost always be found near their vehicles, identifying and approaching such tourists was far easier. Finally, despite the great combined size of Alaska and the Yukon, campground and RV parks are usually isolated, especially outside of the few cities and towns. Thus, their locations are well publicized and they attract a concentration of self-drivers.

The questionnaire contained quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions aimed at gathering demographic information, previous self-drive recreation experience, details pertaining to the current trip, and a set of 8-point Likert-type scales aimed at determining serious leisure participation where respondents rated their agreement for particular items on a scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 8 (strongly agree). This set of questions was pre-coded so that several items related to each of Stebbins’ (1982, 2007) six characteristics of serious leisure. The questions “Road tripping makes me feel better about myself” and “Road tripping makes me feel like part of a group”, for instance, were
pre-coded to eliciting data related to the benefits element. On survey days, all interested non-Alaskan and non-Yukon campers at each site were given questionnaires. The author approached participants in person, explained the study, and asked if they would like to partake in the study. Questionnaires were then collected by the author that evening or the following morning.

Open-ended structured qualitative interviews employing guiding questions (Lane & Waitt 2007) and following a modified grounded-theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were also administered to approximately 10% of participants and recorded. A theoretical sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994) regimen was used to cover the widest possible variety of tourists. As one aim of the study was to interview a variety of travelers, the researcher selected subjects who showed the most variation from those who had already been interviewed. Such variation was based upon the type of vehicle and its condition, as well as visible demographic differences as in age, gender, nationality, race, license plate state or province of origin, and outward signs of socio-economic status. The goal of this sampling method was to get fairly equal numbers of interviews from a range of different types of travelers so as to cover the spectrum of road trippers in this region. These interviews were conducted to augment the quantitative facet of this study with qualitative methods that have been established in the study of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007). This, it was hoped, would allow results from both methods to be compared to determine if the quantitative questionnaire was returning similar results to the qualitative interviews. Additionally, numerous informal conversations were also held with the
survey respondents as many were exceedingly eager to discuss their current and past trips. Similar to the study conducted in Northwest Australia by Lane and Waitt (2007), observations and insights from these informal conversations were noted as well.

Analysis

Due to the subjective nature of serious leisure study (Yoder, 1997) it is quite difficult to find a statistically perfect delineation between serious leisure and project-based leisure. The qualitative methods employed in this study indicated that there is more of a continuum between the two with much overlap in many respondents, so a logical and practical, yet nonetheless subjective, means of separating serious recreationists from project-based ones was devised. As presence of the element of the leisure career is the primary difference between serious and project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2005), the presence of this element was chosen to indicate which self-drive recreation participants were serious. Stebbins’ stated that such a leisure career, “Needs time to take root and grow. Thus tourists do not become hobbyists simply by taking one or two cultural tours…The career of this hobbyist develops along the lines of accumulated knowledge and experience…,” (1996; p. 949). Stebbins does not provide a definite indication of when there would be enough of this accumulated knowledge and experience to allow the classification of dedication to an activity as a career, however, but obviously self-drive travelers who had only taken a few trips would be unlikely to have accumulated enough.
From information gained through the qualitative interviews given in conjunction with this survey, as well as from participant-observer experience in self-drive recreation, it was determined that approximately five long-distance (over 2,000 miles) trips provided adequate experience and knowledge, such as in the areas of trip-planning, budgeting, navigating, and the recognition and anticipation of and ability to respond to different situations (weather, road conditions, vehicle issues), for a typical self-drive recreationist to become proficient at their activity. This figure can also be seen as representing enough trips so as to allow for consideration of those trips as being part of a career, as Kane and Zink (2004) mentioned this five trip figure—in a trip-based serious leisure activity—as an indicator of high levels of experience and dedication in the group of kayakers they studied. To further divide project-based leisure from serious leisure, Stebbins also explained that project-based activities are those that are undertaken occasionally as opposed to fairly regularly (2005). Therefore, frequency of trips was also taken into account in this study, and again based on qualitative interviews it became apparent that travelers who took at least one long trip every two years seemed far more involved with their activity than those who traveled less frequently. As this is an exploratory empirical study of the project-leisure phenomenon with no prior research on which to base analytical methods, it is possible that this method may not be the most appropriate, and future research along the same subject may discover more suitable means for dividing serious and project-based leisure recreationists. However, it is believed that the methods employed in this particular study were adequate for the task.
Thus, the respondents were divided into serious and project-based self-drive recreation participants based upon the number of prior trips they had taken and their frequency. To be classified as serious for the purposes of this paper, respondents had to have made over five trips in at least the past ten years, as Buchanan (1985) noted that in order for a recreationist to be considered committed—in other words, serious—participation needs to have persisted over time. While each individual trip could be considered as project-based leisure, observations made by the author demonstrated that such a frequency of trips was more than enough to be indicative of a serious inclination in participants. Only trips taken in the last 10 years were considered in this analysis because although participants may have had far greater participation in the past and thus have much experience, if they are no longer taking trips frequently then their commitment and seriousness are now lower (Kuentzel & McDonald, 1992). The rest of the participants, including those who only occasionally traveled and those who had only recently begun to take such trips, were classified as project-based. These two groups were then compared using one-way ANOVA to elicit any significant (at the 0.05 level) differences between them that may hint at reasons and factors for their varying levels of dedication to self-drive recreation.

RESULTS

Of the 229 total surveys collected, 190 (83%) contained complete information in the areas of previous trip numbers and frequency for serious/project-based classification. Of this 190, 112 (59%) were identified as the former and 78 (41%) as the latter.
Demographically, there were two significant differences between the groups—age and retirement status. Serious travelers were more likely to be older and retired, with a mean of age of 58.73 and 72% retired (standard deviations = 10.74 and 45%), as opposed to 54.51 and 55% retired (SDs = 15.08 and 50.1%) for those who were project-based. About half (54.8%) of all respondents indicated that retirement was the change factor that enabled them to travel more, with a significant difference between serious and project-based travelers at 61.5% for serious travelers. Pertaining to just their current trip to Alaska and NW Canada, serious devotees had a significantly higher number of miles that they drove through the region, at a mean of 4486.23 compared to 3437.58 (SDs = 2304.1 and 2107). However, there was no significant difference in the number of days spent in the region, thereby indicating that serious road-trippers drive more miles per day on average than non-serious ones. As can be expected based upon the method used to separate project-based and serious leisure participants, there were significant differences in the means of how long each group had spent road-tripping and how frequently they did so. On average, serious travelers took their first self-drive recreation trip in late 1979 and made their first trip to Alaska in very late 1999 (SDs = 13.66 and 12.06). Project-based travelers, on the other hand, took their first trip in early 1991 and first came to Alaska in early 2003 (SDs = 16.81 and 9.65). There were no significant differences in the percentages of respondents who are responsible for the care of friends and/or family back home.
All but one of the respondents with complete information were Caucasian, with the exception being an East-Indian family. Two other groups of Asians were asked to participate, but declined citing poor English skills. Several other groups of European travelers who could be potential respondents also declined for the same reason.

Some significant differences existed in how each group responded to the Likert-type scale statements crafted to determine levels of serious leisure dedication. Out of scales of 1 to 8, where 8 was the strongest agreement and 1 was the strongest disagreement, serious self-drive recreation participants were more likely to list road-tripping as their favorite activity (means = 6.34 vs. 5.85, SDs = 1.49 and 1.68), think of and identify themselves as road-trippers (means = 5.08 vs. 4.25, SDs = 2.14 and 2.19), and identify with other travelers they see on the road (means = 5.12 vs. 4.37, SDs = 1.76 and 2.03). These items indicated a stronger identification with self-drive recreation amongst the serious participants. They also were more likely to feel almost compelled to take road trips (means = 4.64 vs. 3.72, SDs = 2.28 and 2.08), and to state that a life on the road would appeal to them (means = 4.87 and 4.00, SDs = 2.34 and 2.23). Those in the project-based group were more likely to say that road-tripping made them feel exhausted (means = 4.62 vs. 3.31, SDs = 2.11 and 1.81). Interestingly, this group was less likely to indicate that they only like to take road trips infrequently (means = 4.77 vs. 5.64, SDs = 2.12 and 2.21). There were no significant differences in any of the “I would travel more if I had more…” items.

There also were no significant differences between groups for any of the enjoyment measures, and in fact both serious and project-based road-trippers had means scores that were very close. Serious self-drivers ranked satisfaction with this trip with a
mean of 7.09 out of 8 (SD = 1.06), while project-based ones ranked it a mean of 6.94 (SD = 0.98). Agreement with wanting to take another trip to Alaska/NW Canada received a mean of 6.24 (SD = 2.15) for serious drivers and 6.13 (SD = 2.09) for non-serious. Desire that the trip could be longer was a mean of 5.30 (SD = 2.28) for serious, and 5.38 (2.33) for non-serious. Thus, the greatest variation between any of these measures was only 0.13. Finally, no significant differences in the social world items were found between both groups. There was also agreement in both serious and project-based self-drive recreationists with the statements “I enjoy taking long road trips alone” (means = 5.73 vs. 5.95, SDs = 2.41 and 2.48), and “I associate with other travelers on the road” (means = 5.34 vs. 5.03, SDs = 1.74 and 2.01), and fairly strong shared disagreement with “I like to travel in a group” (means = 2.05 vs. 2.47, SDs = 1.56 and 1.76) and “I have a network of friends who travel” (means = 3.92 vs. 3.34, SDs = 2.07 and 2.15). These results are summarized in Table 1.
### Table 4.1. Results from one-way ANOVA between serious and project-based self-drive recreation participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Serious</th>
<th>Project-Based</th>
<th>P-value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Means (Standard Deviation)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>58.73 (10.74)</td>
<td>54.51 (15.08)</td>
<td>.025*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Retired</td>
<td>72 (0.45)</td>
<td>55 (0.50)</td>
<td>.012*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Travel more due to retirement</td>
<td>61.5 (0.5)</td>
<td>42.9 (0.5)</td>
<td>.022*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days spent in region</td>
<td>53.82 (94.99)</td>
<td>36.83 (25.51)</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles driven in region</td>
<td>4486 (2304.11)</td>
<td>3438 (2107.01)</td>
<td>.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First trip</td>
<td>1979.89 (13.66)</td>
<td>1991.37 (16.81)</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First trip to Alaska</td>
<td>1999.93 (12.06)</td>
<td>2003.21 (9.65)</td>
<td>.048*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks spent traveling per year</td>
<td>11.17 (10.14)</td>
<td>8.86 (7.59)</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Care for friends and family</td>
<td>11 (.31)</td>
<td>.16 (.37)</td>
<td>.309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking road trips is my favorite activity</td>
<td>6.34 (1.49)</td>
<td>5.85 (1.68)</td>
<td>.042*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to think of self as road tripper</td>
<td>5.08 (2.14)</td>
<td>4.25 (2.19)</td>
<td>.010*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify with other road travelers</td>
<td>5.12 (1.76)</td>
<td>4.37 (2.03)</td>
<td>.009*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I almost feel compelled to take road trips</td>
<td>4.64 (2.28)</td>
<td>3.72 (2.08)</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A life on the road appeals to me</td>
<td>4.87 (2.34)</td>
<td>4.00 (2.23)</td>
<td>.012*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constraints items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping can make me feel exhausted</td>
<td>3.31 (1.81)</td>
<td>4.62 (2.11)</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only like to take trips like this infrequently</td>
<td>5.64 (2.21)</td>
<td>4.77 (2.12)</td>
<td>.009*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would travel more if had more money</td>
<td>6.01 (2.55)</td>
<td>6.00 (2.49)</td>
<td>.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would travel more if had more free time</td>
<td>4.95 (2.78)</td>
<td>5.16 (2.84)</td>
<td>.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would travel more if had less family obligations</td>
<td>4.13 (2.55)</td>
<td>3.59 (2.47)</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would travel more if had less social obligations</td>
<td>3.77 (2.44)</td>
<td>3.30 (2.24)</td>
<td>.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enjoyment items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with this trip</td>
<td>7.09 (1.06)</td>
<td>6.94 (0.98)</td>
<td>.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would take another trip to this region</td>
<td>6.24 (2.15)</td>
<td>6.13 (2.09)</td>
<td>.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish this trip could be longer</td>
<td>5.30 (2.28)</td>
<td>5.38 (2.33)</td>
<td>.829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I came back, I would not want to drive</td>
<td>6.17 (2.14)</td>
<td>5.79 (2.48)</td>
<td>.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social world items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy taking long road trips alone</td>
<td>5.73 (2.413)</td>
<td>5.95 (2.481)</td>
<td>.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I associate with other travelers on the road</td>
<td>5.34 (1.736)</td>
<td>5.03 (2.007)</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to travel with a group</td>
<td>2.05 (1.564)</td>
<td>2.47 (1.759)</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a network of friends who travel</td>
<td>3.92 (2.066)</td>
<td>3.34 (2.150)</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .05 level

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*1=strongly disagree, 8=strongly agree
DISCUSSION

Comparison Between Serious and Project-Based Participants in Self-Drive Recreation

From the results, it appears that the hypotheses were partially supported. While it was predicted that serious self-drive recreation participants would have more resources and freedom from obligations, many of the survey questions designed to measure this prediction did not produce significant differences between those who were classified as serious and those who were project-based. The only differences in terms of trip and traveler characteristics were that serious road-trippers were more likely to be older, and also more likely to be retired. This is a logical result, as self-drive recreation is an all-consuming process that can only be participated in away from home. Freedom from work obligations is therefore clearly needed for trips lasting more than a few weeks, and full-time RVing would not be possible if one still needed to work. Other questions aimed at discerning different amounts of resources between the groups did not show differences that were anticipated. Particularly, the items “I would travel more if I had more: a) money, b) free time, c) freedom from family obligations, and d) freedom from social obligations” produced no significant differences. Likewise, there was no difference for the items “Driving to and/or through Alaska/the Yukon: a) is too expensive, b) takes too much time, c) takes too much planning”. It would therefore seem that project-based road-trippers are not kept from serious participation in the activity by resource constraints.
It was surprising that there were no feelings of financial constraints with the project-based drivers, although perhaps this arises from the fact that self-drive recreation is an expensive undertaking, especially in light of rising fuel costs. As this study was conducted in the field, contact was made with only those travelers who could afford to travel to Alaska in the first place. Stebbins (2005, 2007) indicated that project-based leisure would be ideal for people without many resources—especially discretionary time—at their disposal as it does not require the investment needed for serious leisure. While the results from this study do not contradict this postulation, they also do not provide support for it.

Enjoyment of self-drive recreation was one area that did produce the expected results. It was hypothesized that project-based leisure participants would greatly enjoy their trips. Enjoyment measures scored highly for both groups with no significant differences, indicating that enjoyment is equally high for both the serious and project-based self-drive recreation participants. The only area that had a difference that could be applied to enjoyment is from the “I only like to take trips like this infrequently” item. Project-based drivers scored lower on this item than serious ones, meaning that they show a greater desire to take trips more frequently. Serious drivers may be slightly less enthusiastic, as their own participation rates are more likely to be closer to satisfying them as they may have fewer constraints, such as time, to limit them. The survey item addressing financial constraints determined that both groups felt that if they had more money, they would travel more, and this can be taken as another indicator of high amounts of enjoyment and a desire for deeper participation in self-drive recreation.
Another area of the hypotheses that was supported was that of identification with self-drive recreation being stronger in those who undertake it as a serious pursuit. As those who participate in an activity as a serious leisure pastime have a greater dedication to it (Stebbins, 1982), they are more likely to identify themselves with that activity. Project-based participants who are not nearly as engrossed in following the same activity will not feel that it is a central life interest as their dedication and participation levels are lower (Stebbins, 2005). Perhaps over time they will develop a stronger attraction and thus increased identity with the activity if it evolves into a more serious pursuit (Stebbins, 1997), but at lesser levels of devotion such feelings are likely to be lacking, and the results support this notion.

**Unique Conditions of Self-Drive Recreation**

On closer analysis, the reason that many of the results do not fully support the hypotheses may be due to the nature of self-drive recreation itself. Road-tripping requires an intensive and longer-term 24-hour involvement with the activity because it carries participants away from their homes and many of their other obligations and pastimes. Because it is such an all-encompassing activity, and because it is usually engaged in for extended periods, it creates blocks of time of intense leisure participation. Such blocks may be more easily planned and managed, leading to lower feelings of constraint arising from other obligations. Additionally, unlike other activities such as sports fandom (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Gibson et al., 2002; Jones, 2000);
competitive fishing (Yoder, 1997); and dog show participation (Baldwin & Norris, 1999; Gillespie et al., 2002); self-drive recreation is more independent of schedules imposed by others, and is thus more flexible.

This study has also indicated that most participants take trips once-a-year or less often, so there is considerable time between trips. Trips themselves require total dedication, but they occur only occasionally. This more relaxed and discretionary nature of self-drive recreation may allow participants to better schedule and plan for trips so that they can occur at the best possible moments in terms of free time (e.g., vacation time off from work, children out of school for the summer) and with planning to address other obligations (e.g., arranging for care of dependent relatives, saving up enough money for the trip). Because of this, participants may not feel constrained, and may actually feel that they are getting what they perceive as an optimal amount of self-drive recreation participation. Both groups did show a high level of agreement with the statement “I would travel more if I had more money”, indicating at least that both are experiencing some degree of financial constraint, and that increased funds would likely translate to increased participation.

Self-drive recreation itself may also be responsible for the fairly negative scores obtained in the analysis of the social world items included in this survey. Stebbins (2007) explained that social interaction is one of the lasting benefits produced from serious leisure participation, although such interaction may be reduced in project-based leisure given the short-term nature of the activity (2005). It would be expected that serious leisure road trippers would therefore be more likely to have social worlds that have arisen out of their recreational travel than their project-based counterparts; however this was not
observed and may be explainable by how many undertake their travel. Although there are organizations that plan large caravans of vehicles to Alaska (Valencia, 2006), the relative numbers of such travelers are small. Instead, self-drive recreation is a largely independent undertaking whereby individual vehicles are isolated from each other. Those travelers in one vehicle will have little interaction with those in other vehicles on the road while driving, and interaction at overnight facilities may be limited as well. There is far less social interaction than in other forms of tourism, such as group tours or cruises, as self-drive travel is one of the most independent types of tourism (Olsen, 2002; Hyde & Lawson, 2003). Because of this independent character of self-drive recreation, it appears that the social world expected in most other serious recreational activities is reduced or missing entirely.

Limitations and Future Study

Of course, self-drive recreation is only one activity. The results of a similar study on other recreational activities may produce different results, especially due to some of the unusual characteristics of self-drive recreation relative to many other activities. For instance, self-drive tourism for many participants often involves long periods of constant and intense participation—lasting up to weeks or months at a time—that are then separated by long periods of inactivity. For some adherents, particularly full-time RVers (Guinn, 1980), it is adopted as such a strong serious leisure activity that they pursue a constant state of participation and even go so far as to sell their homes and most of their belongings so as to dedicate themselves completely to road trips. Additionally, as previously noted, self-drive recreation is a very independent activity (Olsen, 2002; Hyde
& Lawson, 2003), and it seems to be lacking the benefit of a social world (Stebbins, 2007). Furthermore, although it is certainly not required for participation, many respondents approached in this study clearly had spent tens, or even hundreds, of thousands of dollars on specialized vehicles and other equipment for their trips, in addition to other expenses such as fuel, thus clearly showing their strong commitment and involvement (Bloch, Black, & Lichtenstein, 1989; Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992). Such intensive participation and expenditure in self-drive recreation is uncommon when this activity is compared to others that have been studied in the context of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007), and these conditions may produce relationships between serious and project-based participation that are just as uncommon when compared to other activities.

Also, this study employed a convenience sample of locations instead of a random sample. While this sampling did capture a wide variety of road travelers, it was limited in that it was only performed at campgrounds and thus missed the entire spectrum of travelers who opt to stay at hotels, motels, lodges, and bed and breakfasts. It is logical to assume that such self-drivers would be different to some degree from those encountered in this study, especially as those without RVs or trailers might be far more likely to seek more developed overnight facilities. However, it was not deemed feasible to obtain permission to interview at the multitude of lodging businesses, especially since potential respondents would be located in rooms separate from their identifying vehicles instead of relaxing in the open next to them. A more thorough examination of self-drive recreation participants in this region would need either extensive resources to find and contact all varieties of self-drive travelers to Alaska and northwest Canada, or perhaps gain the decidedly difficult-to-obtain approval to conduct studies at border crossings.
Finally, as mentioned before, the methods used to separate serious and project-based self-drive recreationists were also exploratory as such studies have never been performed before. Although care was given to developing means to divide the groups based upon observations from concurrent studies, it is possible that the methods chosen in this research were not the best possible ones, or may not be applicable to all recreational activities. Additionally, as this theory of project-based leisure is new and untested, future research may find that its relationship with serious leisure is not so much the dichotomy that has been discussed, but rather more of a continuum of the type that has been proposed for the similar constructs of leisure specialization (Kuentzel & McDonald, 1992) and commitment (Scott & Shafer, 2001).

If performed again, this study may employ other methods to determine dedication such as perhaps examining whether or not respondents had specialized vehicles, as the possession of such equipment would indicate the expenditure of considerable amounts of money on self-drive recreation, and such a situation may be appropriately considered as an indication of higher levels of dedication to an activity. Less serious self-drivers, on the other hand, may be less likely to own such expensive, specialized road-tripping vehicles or trailers and would be more likely to travel only in their everyday vehicle or a rented RV instead.
CONCLUSION

Project-Based Leisure and its Relationship to Serious Leisure

The results from this study lent some support to the notion that a project-based leisure pursuit can evolve into a serious one for some recreationists, and that many people who undertake an activity as a serious one initially started it as a project-based undertaking. It was hypothesized that the quantitative data collected in this study would show a clear delineation between serious and project-based self-drive recreation participants in terms of constraints, with serious road trippers feeling less constrained by time and money and experiencing greater pleasure with the activity. However, this was not the case. Both groups felt strongly, and scored nearly identically, on wishing they had more money and time. Enjoyment ratings were also non-significantly different and very high. This indicates that at least for self-drive recreation, there is an extremely strong draw to the activity, and even those participants who have the least constraints and can engage in traveling far more than others still are not satiated. Social and family obligations, as proposed by Stebbins (2005), did not seem to pose a major constraint to either group.

As previously mentioned, the lack of a clear delineation between project-based and serious adherents could be due to the fact that there may be no strict boundary between project-based and serious leisure. The two may more appropriately serve as opposite ends of a continuum, and participants would fall on different points along that continuum depending on a variety of factors pertaining to their participation. If such
were the case, for example, the results from this study hint that those self-drive recreation participants who fall closer to the project-based leisure end would feel a higher constraint due to a lack of free time than those placed closer to serious leisure.

Despite these surprisingly close feelings in both groups, other data clearly indicates that there are at least some constraints that keep the project-based participants from becoming more serious. Serious drivers were significantly older, and a greater percentage of them were retired. They also indicated that they were more likely to have increased traveling time due to their retirement. Thus, free time is clearly a constraint that is keeping project-based participants from becoming serious ones. The qualitative portion of this study supported this, as many road trippers indicated that they could only take limited trips while employed, and then became far more serious travelers once they retired. This is also hinted at by project-based travelers scoring significantly lower in the item measuring if they would only like to take trips like this one infrequently—they indicated less agreement, meaning that they had a stronger desire to travel more.

Thus, from the context of self-drive recreation, it appears at least that a lack of discretionary time is a leisure resource constraint that keeps project-based recreationists from becoming serious, and that once this constraint is negotiated (Jackson et al., 1993) many become serious participants and experience the elevated sense of identity with the activity. Clearly the less-serious adherents are greatly enjoying this activity, as this would be expected if they were to desire deeper participation on the level of serious leisure. It is likely this pleasure and enjoyment that drives the adoption of an activity as a serious one once constraints are removed.
Applicability

The results from this study can be useful to tourism marketers in Alaska and northwestern Canada, and probably elsewhere, who seek to attract and grow their self-drive tourism customer base. Road-trippers who visit the region before they retire may be far more likely to return for much longer periods in the future after retirement if they have high levels of enjoyment from their trip. Thus, this slightly younger demographic, though they may initially spend less time and less money on their early trips, will likely return several years in the future and then spend more time and money, especially if they have high enjoyment with the activity initially. Applying considerable attention to meeting the needs of this particular demographic, therefore, could reap benefits several years down the line and help to ensure a steady market as the oldest of travelers who currently spend the most money will likely have to reduce visitation due to age and health-related constraints. Marketing, services, and facilities aimed at first-time or less-frequent self-drive visitors in the region—such as less expensive RV rentals and demographic-specific advertising—would not only encourage tourism in the present, but would also seem likely to translate into repeat visitation in the not-to-distant future.

Of course, these results are also pertinent to leisure theory, as they add to the sparse literature on the project-based leisure addition to serious leisure theory (Stebbins, 2005, 2007), as well as to the academically oft-overlooked recreational activity of self-drive recreation. High levels of enjoyment from a project-based activity was shown to be a strong indication of participants desiring to engage in such an activity more seriously, and once constraints—in this case, free time limitations—were removed, then their participation would increase and the activity would become serious. Through the use of
self-drive recreation as the context in which to study this phenomenon, it became clear that this recreational activity is quite unlike many others in numerous ways, and has some unusual conditions, especially along the lines of participation timeframes and capital expenditures. It is hoped that such revelations will spur further analysis of this activity, as it is grossly under-studied in relation to its ubiquitousness in Western society.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary aim of this research was to explore the new theory of project-based leisure in the context of self-drive recreation. This final chapter summarizes the conclusions and implications from the separate studies that comprise this dissertation and also indicates areas for future research.

SUMMARIES AND KEY FINDINGS

This study attempted to answer six research questions and seven hypotheses pertaining to serious and project-based leisure and self-drive recreation. A summary of these questions and hypotheses, along with their respective outcomes, follows:

Research Questions

RQ1: Can segments of the self-drive recreation market to Alaska be classified as enthusiasts in a form of serious leisure?

Members of the Alaskan self-drive recreation market were able to be classified as participating in the activity as serious leisure. Many of them described or displayed the six elements of serious leisure as set forth by Stebbins (1982). Furthermore, those participants in self-drive recreation who engage in their activity full-time—that is, live out of their RVs permanently—were found to be so intensely engaged in self-drive recreation that they pursued it ceaselessly. This constant participation was thus viewed as an extreme form of serious leisure dedication.
RQ2: Can the remaining segments of the self-drive recreation market be classified as undertaking project-based leisure?

Those self-drive recreation participants in Alaska who are not serious leisure adherents were found to be participating in project-based leisure. All of the Stebbins’ elements of serious leisure (1982) were apparent in these travelers except for that of a career, and project-based leisure is essentially serious leisure with the absence of that single element (Stebbins, 2007). As they either had only recently started their participation in self-drive recreation and had not developed a career yet, were only very infrequent self-drivers, or they merely used self-drive recreation as a means of convenient transportation in what were otherwise serious travel careers, these self-drive participants could not be considered serious. Yet due to the relatively long lengths of the trips, considerable planning required, and definite end-points for their participation when they arrived back home, these travelers fit the description of project-based leisure devotees.

RQ3: What are the differences between those who undertake road-tripping seriously from those who pursue it as project-based leisure?

The primary difference between those who undertake serious self-drive recreation to Alaska and northwestern Canada from those who pursue it as project-based leisure was found to be that serious travelers have more free time in which to engage in the activity. Most likely due to the increase of free time that accompanies retirement, most serious
travelers were also found to be older and retired. Serious self-drive recreationists were also found to have a greater sense of identity with their chosen recreational pursuit. No differences between enjoyment levels or leisure constraints (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991) such as monetary, social, or family issues were found between both groups.

RQ4: Can a project-based leisure road trip be a marker in what may evolve into a serious leisure career?

It was found that self-drive recreation trips taken as project-based leisure endeavors could be viewed in retrospect as markers (Kane & Zink, 2004) in serious leisure careers. Many travelers who took early trips as distinct outings that were separate from any notion of a leisure career, and who greatly enjoyed those trips, might decide to take up self-drive recreation as a serious leisure undertaking. Thus, early trips would serve as turning points in what would become serious leisure careers. In other words, taken by themselves, early trips would only constitute project-based leisure. However, if early trips led to subsequent trips over the years, then all these trips combined would evolve into a career, and those early trips would serve as turning points, or markers, in that career.
RQ5: What factors, motivations, and conditions may lead to the adoption of a project-based leisure undertaking as a serious one, specifically in the area of self-drive recreation?

Enjoyment was found to be the single largest factor and motivation that leads to the adoption of project-based leisure as serious leisure in self-drive recreation. Both project-based and serious travelers reported very high and nearly identical levels of enjoyment, and qualitative interviews revealed almost universally that early enjoyment with the activity was the main reason participants indicated a desire for deeper participation. The condition that allows such an evolution was found to be the acquirement of more free time, such as that which occurs with retirement. Family, social, and monetary obligations were not found to be leisure constraints (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991).

RQ6: Can serious leisure devotion and/or project-based leisure devotion to a recreational activity be determined from quantitative data analysis?

It is believed that serious and project-based leisure devotion to self-drive recreation can be determined from quantitative data analysis. Although not achieved completely in this exploratory study, the results came close to producing an acceptable structural equation model to represent this theory quantitatively, with very high factor loading scores between the latent constructs representing Stebbins’ elements of serious leisure (1982). Only one element out of six was unable to fit in this model, and it is highly suspected that this was due simply to problems with survey items and not indicative of any flaw in the model.
Hypotheses

H1: Self-drive recreation can be classified as falling under either serious or project-based leisure.

   Supported. Qualitative methods indicated that self-drive recreation is classifiable as serious leisure for some adherents, and that the rest undertake this recreational activity as project-based leisure.

H2: The differences between those who undertake self-drive recreation as serious leisure and those who pursue it as project-based leisure will be related to different amounts of resources such as time and money, constraints from obligations such as family and work, and additionally identity with the activity. Serious leisure road trippers will have more resources and fewer obligations.

   Partially supported. Serious self-drive recreation participants demonstrated a greater amount of free time and fewer work obligations than their project-based counterparts, as well as a deeper sense of identity with the activity. However, there were no differences in other constraints, such as family ones, and project-based drivers did not indicate having greater financial constraints than serious ones.
H3: Enjoyment of the self-drive recreation experience will be a primary motivation in stimulating the desire for adoption of the project-based leisure activity as a serious one.

Supported. Contentment and enjoyment with the self-drive recreation experience ranked highly for both serious and project-based travelers. Qualitative interviews indicated that enjoyment with the activity was the primary reason for its adoption as a serious undertaking.

H4: Acquiring greater resources such as time and money and reducing obligations such as work and family will be the principal factors that allow the adoption of project-based leisure to develop into serious leisure.

Partially supported. Free time was the only resource found to allow for such an evolution. More funds and less obligations from family or social sources were not found to be important in enabling the adoption of self-drive recreation as a serious recreational pursuit.

H5: Previous self-drive recreation trips undertaken as project-based leisure will serve as landmarks in the leisure careers of those who now enjoy the activity as a serious leisure pursuit.

Supported. Early project-based self-drive recreation trips serve as turning points and markers in the leisure careers of travelers who become serious adherents to this recreational activity.
H6: Both serious and project-based leisure devotion to a recreational activity can be determined from quantitative data analysis.

   Partially supported. Five of the six elements of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982) were successfully measured using quantitative means. The sixth element likely needed to be excluded more due to issues with measurement than with incompatibility in the quantitative model.

**IMPLICATIONS**

1. Self-drive recreation was classified as an activity that is engaged as serious leisure for some participants. Most road-trippers met all of Stebbins’ (1982) criteria for serious leisure and express a deep dedication to their travels. This adds further support to this theory, and another activity that can be added to the ever-growing list of those that have been found to be examples serious leisure.

2. Through the classification of participation in self-drive recreation as project-based leisure, this study has been the first to examine and find support for this new addition to serious leisure theory (Stebbins, 2005) that was previously unexplored in the published literature. This study was also the first to collect empirical evidence in support of this theory.
3. The relationship between serious and project-based leisure was explored for the first time in this study, and it was found that, at least for participation in extended self-drive recreation trips, project-based leisure trips can indeed evolve into serious participation, and that early trips taken as projects can later be viewed as early turning points in what would develop into a leisure career (Stebbins, 2007). Serious participants were also found to be free of at least one leisure constraint (Crawford et al., 1991)—free time limitations—and that appears to be the deciding factor in keeping many project-based road-trippers from becoming more serious. Thus, somewhat as Stebbins’ predicted (2005), project-based leisure is engaged in by those recreationists who do not have the necessary amounts of resources, or lack of constraints, enjoyed by serious participants.

4. Self-drive recreation was examined with leisure theory for the first time, and was shown to have unique characteristics that make it especially interesting to study in the context of serious leisure. Unlike many of the other activities studied as serious leisure, self-drive recreation is one of the few that has participants who frequently engage in recreation full-time. This constant state of recreation, whereby adherents live in their vehicles on the road for years at a time and sometimes even sell their homes and cut many ties with their former lives, has not been described before in serious leisure literature and represents an extreme form of the phenomenon. Such dedication in self-drive participants, along with the related sizable expenditures they make in pursuit of their commitment to this activity (Bloch, Black, & Lichtenstein, 1989; Siegenthaler & Lam, 1992), are characteristics of this activity that have not been previously mentioned in the small but growing body of academic literature pertaining to it.
5. This study was also the first to explore the use of quantitative methods for serious leisure study, and such methods were found to be probably suitable for use in the classification of serious and project-based leisure. Although not entirely successful in this study, the results were close enough to suggest that such methods could be used in future studies, opening up the study of serious leisure to mixed-methods study and the benefits to be had by such methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

6. This study also has implications for tourism managers and businesses in Alaskan and northwestern Canadian communities whose economies rely upon self-drive recreation. It was found that project-based participants in self-drive recreation who have high enjoyment from their trips will be more likely to become serious travelers in the future when they are able to have more free time. If communities wish to ensure that there are large numbers of future tourists, and this is a concern given growing border security issues (Taylor, 2005) and rising fuel prices, then they would do best to cater especially to this pre-retirement segment. Although they may not make as many trips or take ones that are as long as the current retiree segment, these project trippers will constitute the next wave of serious drivers, especially if they greatly enjoy their project trips. Thus, care should be taken to appeal to this market segment, which includes those who fly to the region and then rent RVs, as it may represent an investment that will encourage repeat travel several years in the future.
7. Finally, while evidence was found to support Stebbins’ theories on project-based leisure and its relationship to serious leisure (1982; 2005; 2007), it needs to be noted that the division between project-based leisure and serious leisure was found to rely heavily on the subjective interpretation of several key factors, such as what was meant by “infrequent” and “occasional” participation rates (Stebbins, 2005). It is quite possible that another researcher could have interpreted these factors differently and not obtained the same results. Thus, it appears that it would be more prudent to view project-based leisure as the low end of a continuum of leisure dedication, with full-time serious leisure on the other end, rather than as a dichotomy as proposed by Stebbins (2005). Such a continuum would allow for the subjective nature of leisure (Yoder, 1997) to be more properly taken into consideration, and would enable researchers to place examples of leisure participation along a scale instead of into either one category or the other. This would be especially useful for those cases where it is not readily apparent into what category the example of participation would fall, and where such a decision would be dependent on the highly subjective criteria.

Therefore, while the hypotheses were indeed supported, or at least partially supported, in this study, these results hinge on the interpretation of the relationship between project-based and serious leisure as a dichotomy, and this interpretation may not be the most appropriate way in which to view these related leisure theories.
FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Although this study has deepened the understanding of serious leisure, project-based leisure, and self-drive recreation, it has raised perhaps even more questions for future exploration than it has answered. First, there are several questions pertaining to the relationship between serious and project-based leisure. As project-based leisure is in essence serious leisure without the element of a leisure career (Stebbins, 2005), this study found that a more exacting definition of such a career may be needed if a more concrete separation between serious and project-based leisure is to be made. Currently there is no specific definition of a leisure career in terms of length and participation rates. The “occasional” and “infrequent” participation described by Stebbins (2005) as a hallmark of project-based leisure is open to highly subjective classification. What defines “infrequent” and “occasional”? And at what point does “infrequent” or “occasional” participation in an activity accumulate enough of a history to be viewed as a leisure “career”? Such questions need to be answered if project-based leisure is to be viewed as a distinct branch of serious leisure theory (2007).

At the same time, however, this research has also brought to light that it may be inappropriate to succinctly divide project-based leisure from serious leisure at all. Evidence was certainly found supporting the theory that participants could be divided into either serious or project-based leisure using Stebbin’s criteria (1982; 2005; 2007), and that research questions and hypotheses could be answered and supported following these criteria. However, such a division was dependent on how the aforementioned key terms, notably “infrequent” and “occasional”, were defined. Therefore, future research is clearly needed on this notion of there being no distinct separation between project-based
leisure and serious leisure, as well as on the use of a leisure participation continuum to see if it is better suited for the classification of activities as project-based leisure and serious leisure than the currently-proposed (Stebbins, 2005) dichotomy is.

Future explorations of the use of quantitative methods for the examination of serious leisure are also called for. This exploratory study did not successfully employ such methods. However, it came close and it is believed that the error lies in survey item wording rather than any problems with the model. Thus, subsequent studies could improve upon the survey items proposed in this research and most likely meet with success. Additionally, the use of quantitative methods other than structural equation modeling, such as partial least squares regression, could also be explored.

This study has also indicated that additional academic interest is warranted on the activity of self-drive recreation. As previously noted, this activity has received scant attention until recently, despite its mass popularity, and is open to much further study. Of special interest is that segment of the self-drive recreation market that engages in full-time participation. These full-timers, who mostly travel in RVs (Guinn, 1980), represent a rare example of people who are so dedicated to a recreational activity that they wish to give themselves to it completely. Furthermore, estimates (Guinn, 1980) indicate that this is a sizeable population, and results from this study indicate that it will likely grow as the baby-boomer generation reaches retirement age. Self-drive recreation is therefore worthy of further study in all areas owing to its currently high and ever-increasing levels of popularity, the deep enjoyment evident in participants, and its unusual characteristics that make driving for pleasure—a seemingly mundane activity—anything but.
Finally, while this study used self-drive recreation to explore the relationship between serious and project-based leisure, it may be fruitful for future studies to examine these theories in the context of other leisure activities, possibly even those that have previously been studied as serious leisure. Self-drive recreation was found to have unusual characteristics that may affect the differences, such as in constraints and social worlds, between those who are more dedicated to it and those who are not. Many studies have been performed using other recreational activities to explore serious leisure, and perhaps these same established activities can be used to examine project-based leisure, as well.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE
Thank you for taking some time to complete this survey! My name is Nicholas Palso and I am an Alaskan collecting data as part of a study for my doctoral degree in Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management at the Pennsylvania State University. Your responses will be used to gain a better understanding of what people (like you!) who drive throughout Alaska and Northern Canada for pleasure are like, what they are looking for from their trips, and how they feel about different matters. This information will then be used to help academic, business, and government agencies gain a better understanding of road travelers in this region. This study is being conducted for research purposes only.

This is a survey of self-drive tourists to Alaska and the Yukon. Please only participate if you feel that you are a traveler who is driving to, from, or throughout this region, or who has flown to this region and then rented a vehicle to travel throughout it.

Please have only one person in your group fill out the survey. While it can be more fun with several people, the best statistical results come from when there is only one person doing the answering. To choose that person, I ask that whoever it was in your group who first thought of taking this trip to Alaska and/or the Yukon Territory fill it out. If there was more than one person (or if no one wants to admit that this whole thing was their idea!), then please have the person who celebrated his or her birthday most recently fill it out.

This survey will probably take you about 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Most of the questions are multiple choice or simple short answers. Your decision to be part of this research is completely voluntary, and you may stop taking the survey at any time. You must be at least 18 years old to partake in the survey. Participation in both the survey and/or interview will be considered your implied consent to take part in this research study.

Interviews may be recorded with your permission. Confidentiality for the interviews and recordings will be strictly maintained. The recordings will be stored on a security-protected computer and only I have will access to them. They will be destroyed in 2010. By participating in and filling out this survey, you indicate that you give permission and consent for the collection of your anonymous data.

Your decision to be part of this research is completely voluntary, and you may stop taking the survey at any time or choose not to answer certain questions.

If you are unable to turn this survey back into me in person but would still like to submit it, you may mail it to:

Nicholas Palso
Re: Road Trip Surveys
RPTM Department
801 Ford Building
University Park, PA 16802

If you have any questions, I can be reached at ntp116@psu.edu. Thank you so much for participating in this study. I greatly appreciate your help.
1. On this map of all the highways in the North, please trace the routes that you took or plan to take during this trip, including routes on the Alaska Marine Highway System ferries. Please also circle any of the cities you may have visited.
Now think about your trip from the time you first arrived in the region shown on the map to the time you think you will leave it. Please answer the following questions based only on your trip to this region. Thanks!

For your vehicle, what is the:

2. Year? ___________
3. Brand/Make? ___________________
4. Model? _______________________

5. What is the ownership status? □ Own □ Lease □ Rent □ Borrow

6. If you rented, did you fly to the North first and then rent it? □ Yes □ No

7. How would you classify this vehicle? Please use an “X” to indicate what you are driving and a “●” to indicate anything you are towing.
   □ Class A Motorhome   □ Trailer Towed on Trailer Hitch
   □ Class B Campervan   □ 5th Wheel Trailer
   □ Class C Motorhome   □ Pop-up Trailer
   □ Truck               □ Truck with Camper Top
   □ Station Wagon      □ SUV
   □ Regular Van or Minivan □ Other Car
   □ Motorcycle         □ Cargo Trailer
   □ Bicycle
   □ Other (please describe) ____________________________

8. How many days do you think you will spend in the region shown on the map? ______

9. How many days do you think you will spend in total on this trip? ________________

10. Roughly how far do you think you will travel throughout the region shown on the map?
      ___________________________________________

11. Roughly how far do you think your total driving trip will cover from your starting point to finish? ____________________________________________
12. What kinds of lodgings do you prefer while in Alaska/the Yukon? Please list, roughly, the number of nights you will stay or park in each of these types:

___ Hotels and Lodges  ___ Motels
___ Cabins or Cottages  ___ Inns or Bed and Breakfasts
___ Private Campgrounds  ___ Publicly-Owned Campgrounds
___ Highway Pull-Offs  ___ Side of the Road
___ RV Parks  ___ Parking Lots
___ With friends or family  ___ Backcountry without vehicle
___ Natural places (on Riverbanks, up Forest Roads, etc.)
___ Other (please describe) ___________________________________

13. How much do you predict the total cost of this trip will be for the region shown on the map, including possible vehicle rental (but do not count your vehicle if you own it)?

_______________________

14. How much do you predict the total cost of your entire trip will be, including possible vehicle rental (but do not count your vehicle if you own it)?

_______________________

15. What types of information sources did you use to plan your trip? Please rank all that apply starting with “1” as the most important source.

___ Previous Visits  ___ Friends or Relatives
___ The Milepost  ___ Bell’s Alaska
___ DeLorme AK Atlas and Gazetteer  ___ Other Guide Books
___ AAA/CAA Maps  ___ AAA/CAA TripTik
___ Internet Sites  ___ Travel Agent
___ Videos or Television Shows  ___ Magazines
___ Email, Letters, or Telephone  ___ Tourist Info Centers
___ Pamphlets and Brochures
___ Other (please describe) ___________________________________

16. In what year did you make your first road trip up here? _________________

17. Please list the top three sights or activities that you want to see or do in the North:

__________________________________________________________________

18. If you had to choose one reason for taking this trip, what would it be?
19. What has been the most difficult part about making this trip?

________________________________________________________________________

20. What average price for fuel would have prevented you from taking this trip?
Currency: ☐ $US  ☐ $CDN  ☐ €  ☐ Other _______
Units:  ☐ L  ☐ Gallon

Price: ______________________________________________________

PART III: Previous Travel Experience

21. Is this the first pleasure road trip over 2,000 miles from home you have ever taken?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No       If “Yes”, please move onto the next page. If “No”, continue below.

22. In what year did you take your first more-than-2,000-mile driving trip? ________

23. About how often do you make such trips?  
☐ More than once a year  ☐ Yearly
☐ Every other year  ☐ Rarely

24. Roughly, what would you say is the average mileage of these trips you take? ______

25. What is the average number of days you spend on these trips? ________________

26. How many weeks a year would you say you are away from home on trips? ________

27. Has the frequency of your trips changed over the years? If so, how?:

☐ More frequent now  ☐ Less frequent now

28. If there has been a change in frequency, what do you think is the reason for it?

________________________________________________________________________

29. Are you independent or part of an organized group?  ☐ Independent  ☐ Group

30. How many times, if any, have you taken organized group road trips before? _______

31. On average, how much money do you think you spend on each trip you take? _______
PART IV: Demographics

Now please tell me some things about yourself…

32. What are your home city, state/province, zip/postal code, and country? If you travel extensively or move between locations, then please list where you feel is most like your home.

_____________________________________________________________________

33. If you have moved after retirement or in adopting a more “nomadic” lifestyle, then what were the city, state/province, zip/postal code, and country of your previous home? And when did you leave it?

_____________________________________________________________________

34. How old are you? ____________ 35. What is your gender?_____________

36. Please list the ages of any other people in your vehicle: ___________________

37. What is, or was, your occupation? ____________________________________

38. Are you retired? □ Yes □ No

39. Please indicate where your household income falls, if you do not mind.

   Currency: □ US $ □ CDN $ □ € □ Other ____________

   □ 0--24,999 □ 25,000--49,999 □ 50,000--74,999 □ 75,000--99,999
   □ 100,000--149,000 □ Over 150,000 □ No answer

40. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

   □ Some High School □ High School of G.E.D. □ Some College
   □ Bachelor’s Degree □ Master’s Degree □ Ph.D. or equivalent

   If you are from a nation that uses a different academic system than the U.S. and Canada, please write the level of your highest degree: _______________________

41. Are you responsible for the care of any relatives or friends back home? □ Yes □ No

42. What is the gender of the person who does most of the driving? ______________

43. What is the age of the person who does most of the driving? ________________
Almost done! The following is a list of statements pertaining to you and your trip. Please circle the number on the scale that best matches how you feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1= I do not agree at all</th>
<th>8 = I strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking road trips is my favorite activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy taking long road trips alone</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I associate with other travelers when I am on the road</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to travel with a group or caravan</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a network of friends who travel</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to think of myself as a road traveler</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I identify with other travelers I see on the road</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family emotionally supports my travels</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only like to take involved trips like this one infrequently</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The idea of a life on the road appeals to me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes has obstacles that I must overcome</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is not always entirely fun, but in general it is</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can be difficult at times</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with this trip</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would take another trip to Alaska/the Yukon</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish that this trip could last longer</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I came back, I would not want to drive</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The drive was the best part of this trip</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning trips is as much fun as taking them</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would rather take road trips than go to work</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I associate more with taking trips like this one than I do with my career</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 = I do not agree at all</strong></td>
<td><strong>8 = I strongly agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping makes me feel…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better about myself</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refreshed or renewed</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhausted</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>productive or accomplished</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like I am doing something important</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like part of a group or community</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of road tripping outweigh any costs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I almost feel compelled to take road trips</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see my road trip history as a series of victories</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have grown in the knowledge and skills I use on my trips</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each trip I take is like an accomplishment in a series to me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am growing more attracted to this activity</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping can be done by anyone</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road tripping requires certain know-how and skills</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road trippers have their own little society</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-road trippers have a hard time understanding me and my road trips</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All road-trippers share at least some common elements</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would travel more if I had more…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>money</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free time</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freedom from family obligations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freedom from social obligations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving to and/or through Alaska/the Yukon…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is too expensive</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takes too much time</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is dangerous</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takes too much planning</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1= I do not agree at all  8 = I strongly agree

I drove to Alaska/the Yukon for…
  the natural scenery
  wilderness and wide-open spaces
  wildlife
  its history
  fishing and/or hunting
  the open highways
  the dirt and gravel roads
  an opportunity to try something new
  adventure
  relaxation

The price of gasoline was an inconvenience

Crossing international borders is a burden

Acquiring a passport would be a hassle for me

I would not go to just the Yukon if I could not continue on to Alaska

Requiring a passport for U.S./Canada border crossings…
  would make me less likely to travel here
  would cost more than I would be willing to pay
  is necessary for security reasons

PART VI: Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative

1. Are you aware that starting in June of next year, you will need a passport to travel between Canada and the United States? □ Yes □ No

2. Do you have a passport now? □ Yes □ No

3. Would you still be willing to make the trip to Alaska if it meant spending an extra $100 per person to obtain passports for each member of your party? □ Yes □ No

4. Do you support this homeland security initiative? □ Yes □ No
Palso Vita

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management
Minor in Geography
The Pennsylvania State University, December 2008

Masters in Public Administration
Villanova University, May 2004

Bachelors of Science in Wildlife Biology
Minor in Geography
University of Alaska Fairbanks, May 2002

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Environmental Protection Specialist, May 2008 to Present
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Washington, District of Columbia

The Pennsylvania State University, under contract from the Pennsylvania Department of
Conservation and Natural Resources, Tiadaghton and Tioga State Forests, Pennsylvania

Research/Teaching Assistant, September 2004 to May 2008
The Pennsylvania State University
Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management, University Park, Pennsylvania

National Visitor Use Monitoring Program Surveyor, September 2004 to January 2008
The Pennsylvania State University under contract from the USDA Forest Service, Allegheny
National Forest, Pennsylvania; Mt. Hood and Deschutes National Forests, Oregon, and
Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Washington

Park and Recreation Intern, September 2002 to July 2004
West Goshen Township, West Chester, Pennsylvania

Wildlife Interpretation Intern, April 2001 to July 2001
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fairbanks, Alaska

PUBLICATIONS

Palso, N. (In press). Perceptions of self-drive tourists along the Alaska-Canada border towards
the increased security requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. Proceedings of
the 2008 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. USDA Forest Service.

Palso, N, and Graefe, A. (In press). Transcontinental wilderness survey: Comparing perceptions
between wilderness users in the eastern and western United States. Proceedings of the 2007
Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. USDA Forest Service.

Palso, N, and Graefe, A. (2007). Eastern wilderness users: Perceptions from two small
wilderness areas. Proceedings of the 2006 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. USDA

Palso, N., Ivy, M., and Clemmons, J. (In press). A Comparison of Local and Non-Local Visitor
Information Seeking Behavior by Visitors to Civil War-Related National Park Service Sites.