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**POSITIVE EMOTIONS IN MATURE ADULTS' LEISURE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES**

A Dissertation in  
Leisure Studies  
by  
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## ABSTRACT

Research in positive psychology has shown that positive emotions initiate beneficial processes, culminating in quality of life. Tourism research has suggested that leisure travel is a substantial source of positive emotions. These two areas of research have not connected, however, leaving the processes that foster and follow from positive emotions in the leisure travel context relatively unknown. The purpose of this dissertation is to explain positive emotions associated with leisure travel in terms of their development over time and in terms of the processes that link social contexts to positive emotions.

The population studied is mature adults (individuals over the age of 45). Mature adults are an important and lucrative travel market, as well as a population segment that enjoys elevated levels of positive emotions. This dissertation uses a mixed-method approach that combines psychographic and ethnographic perspectives to study the positive emotions of mature adults in two leisure travel experiences. The dissertation is formatted as two article manuscripts.

The first manuscript focuses on the processes linking mature adult leisure travelers' social contexts to positive emotions. Socioemotional selectivity theory is the conceptual foundation. This manuscript takes an interpretive ethnographic method approach, using fieldnotes from participant observation of the two experiences studied as well as conversations with key informants. Findings include four processes: amusement from humor, warmth from friendship, interest in activities, and sublime reactions to loss. These findings reveal the importance of social contexts to positive emotions and suggest that norms among communities of leisure travelers and meaningful, personally relevant activities and interpretations foster emotionally positive leisure travel experiences.

The second manuscript focuses on the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. This manuscript uses a psychometric method perspective, modeling overall positive emotions as well as love, joy, interest, and contentment with mixed-effects linear equations based on the *peak model* of positive emotion in leisure travel. The peak

model suggests that positive emotions increase before leisure travel, remain elevated during, and decline after. Findings were consistent with the peak model for positive emotions overall, joy, and interest.

As a whole, the findings of this dissertation carry several theoretical and practical implications. The findings confirm that leisure travel is emotionally positive and contribute to existing knowledge the specific importance of joy, interest, contentment, awe, and amusement. Also, the findings specific to the processes of friendship form a contrast to socioemotional selectivity theory, showing that mature adults engage new friendships as well as established ones. The findings also suggest that in future intervention studies positive psychologists should pursue leisure travel as a context where individuals' positive emotions may be increased. Finally, the findings suggest that fostering positive emotions before and after leisure travel may further improve the value of leisure travel experiences.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In contemporary Western culture, traveling for leisure is supposed to create enjoyment before, during, and after the actual travel itself (Graburn, 2001). Despite the stresses and surprises of getting from one place to another, people expect their leisure travel to be filled with positive emotions. Furthermore, people delight in the anticipation and recollection of leisure travel experiences (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966). It is surprising, then, that streams of research on leisure travel and positive emotions have not connected. Positive emotions are not only inherently enjoyable and chief among travelers' expectations; sustained research of positive emotions in social psychology, known as *positive psychology*, has found that positive emotions explain numerous quality of life outcomes, such as resilience (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009) and well-being (Davidson, 2004).

The goal of this dissertation is to apply existing positive psychology theory to understand the processes underlying and resulting from positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel experiences. In doing so, this work addresses the gap in knowledge resulting from inattention to positive emotions in tourism research and from the omission of leisure travel in positive psychology research.

Ten years of positive psychology research has taught us that repeated experiences of positive emotions lead to accumulation of resources that increase quality of life (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Positive psychologists such as Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, and Finkel (2008) provide compelling accounts of how positive emotions contribute to quality of life. Furthermore, positive psychologists have found that specific positive emotions are particularly important (Fredrickson, 1998; 2000) and that individuals' levels of positive emotions can be substantially increased (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004).

Tourism research has repeatedly suggested connections between leisure travel and positive emotions (e.g., Graburn, 2001; Nawijn, 2009). Because tourism researchers have not engaged the strengths of positive psychology, however, this research has left several important issues unanswered. From existing tourism research, for example, it is unclear how positive emotions develop before, during, and after leisure travel, which positive emotions are especially salient, and how these positive emotions arise. Also, while leisure travel has been linked to quality of life (see Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009, for a summary), whether positive emotions are integral to this relationship is unknown. Studies that examine positive emotions as the mechanism connecting leisure travel and quality of life are noticeably absent.

This dissertation has four specific aims that bridge the gap in knowledge between the positive psychology and tourism literatures' treatment of positive emotions. First, I document the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. Second, I explain these positive emotions in terms of processes arising from the social context of leisure travel. Third, I describe the specific positive emotions experienced in leisure travel. Fourth, I link the positive emotions experienced during leisure travel to long-term quality of life outcomes. The dissertation format is a general introductory chapter followed by two manuscripts. The first manuscript addresses the first aim and the second addresses aims 2 and 3. The fourth aim is addressed in a general conclusion following the two manuscripts.

The population of interest in this study consists of *mature adults*. Mature adults are individuals between the ages of 45 and 59, usually described as middle aged (Strenger, 2009), and individuals 60 and older, usually described as older adults (World Health Organization, 2009). Mature adults are increasing in number around the world. Mature adults in North America are living longer, retiring earlier (Gendell, 2001), and until the 2008 economic crisis, were wealthier than ever before (Johnson, Soto, & Zedlewski, 2008). Compared to younger age groups, mature adult travelers travel more often, farther, and stay longer (Blazey, 1992; Zimmer, Brayerly, & Searle, 1995). Understanding this population's leisure travel experiences is, therefore, important.

According to tourism researchers (e.g., Dann, 2001; Nimrod, 2008), exploring the potential outcomes of leisure travel for mature adults should be a priority for research. Important beneficial outcomes of leisure travel include positive emotions (Graburn, 2001). Positive psychologists have found that mature adults experience higher levels of positive emotions than younger adults (e.g., Carstensen & Mikels, 2005; Mroczek & Kolarz, 1995). Existing tourism research, however, has examined mature adults only as a target market, neglecting mature adults' experiences while traveling, including their experiences of positive emotions.

### **Definition of constructs**

#### **Leisure travel**

The World Tourism Organization, a branch of the United Nations dedicated to documenting travel trends, defines tourism as travel away from home lasting more than one night and less than one year for leisure, business, and other purposes. *Leisure travel* is the subset of tourism (as defined by the World Tourism Organization, 1994) undertaken for purposes of leisure.

#### **Positive emotions, moods, and affect**

The key dependent variables in the dissertation are *positive emotions*, which are distinct from *positive moods* and *positive affect*. Positive emotions are specific, short-term, salient reactions that motivate behavior, while positive moods are longer-term and remain in the background of an individual's awareness (Rosenberg, 1998). Positive affect conflates positive emotions and positive moods. I use seminal works by Rosenberg (1998) and Fredrickson (2004) to reinforce these distinctions.

I use Fredrickson's (2004) definition of *emotions* as "multi-component response tendencies that unfold over relatively short timespans" (p. 1368) as it synthesizes the state of the art in positive psychology research and forms the foundation for precise and valid emotion measurement over time. The central component of these "multi-component tendencies" is the subjective feeling associated with each emotion, which Russell (2003) terms "core affect" (p. 145). This subjective feeling dominates individuals' consciousness for the duration of the emotion episode (Rosenberg, 1998). Individuals experience emotions as "acute, intense, and typically brief psychophysiological changes that result from a response to a meaningful situation in one's environment" (Rosenberg, 1998, p. 250). These characteristics give emotions the power to directly affect behavior (Fredrickson, 1998; Frijda, 2007). The action tendencies of positive emotions tend to broaden or generalize individuals' thinking and behavior (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2004).

*Positive moods* shape perception but carry none of the behavior-changing potency of action tendencies. Positive moods do not occupy individuals' attention but rather "have a background influence on consciousness" (Rosenberg, 1998, p. 240). Also, according to Rosenberg, positive moods come and go less frequently than positive emotions. Positive moods encourage individuals to carry on present patterns of thought, an influence they share with positive emotions. Positive moods do not, however, generalize or broaden thinking and behavior, as positive emotions do. The term *positive affect* is used to describe any kind of subjective positive feeling, be it an emotion or a mood. Positive affect as a variable in social research, therefore, conflates positive emotions and positive moods (Rosenberg, 1998). Foreshadowing Rosenberg, Oatley and Jenkins (1996) used time scales to articulate distinctions between affective constructs such as emotions, moods, and traits (Figure 1-1).





## Literature review

I review the contributions of two fields of research toward understanding the processes underlying and resulting from positive emotions before, during, and after the leisure travel experience. Positive psychology, a branch of social psychology dedicated to the study of positive emotions, personality, and character, offers foundational understanding of the nature and outcomes of positive emotions. Positive psychologists have discovered and explained processes that link positive emotions to enduring quality of life. Positive psychologists have additionally found that positive emotions are especially prevalent among mature adults due to the uniquely selective ways in which mature adults interact with their social contexts. This literature has not, however, addressed leisure travel as a context for positive emotions, and has missed important opportunities to measure positive emotions by excluding participants' words and interpretations from research designs. Tourism researchers, on the other hand, have addressed these issues to a limited extent.

Tourism researchers have examined leisure travel as a context for positive emotions. They have found that positive emotions develop before, during, and after leisure travel, and that this development likely follows a *peak model*. The peak model suggests that positive emotions increase before leisure travel, peak during, and decline after. Also, tourism scholars have linked the social contexts of leisure travel to positive emotions. However, research supporting these findings is incomplete across time, does not discuss positive emotions with any specificity, and does not reveal the processes that link social contexts to positive emotions. Therefore, the breadth of positive emotions associated with leisure travel, and how these positive emotions come about, remains unexplained. Furthermore, studies that connect positive emotions to leisure travel have not examined the outcomes of these positive emotions, such as quality of life. Existing

knowledge about positive emotions from positive psychology could be marshaled to address these shortcomings.

## **The psychology of positive emotions**

### ***Positive emotions build quality of life***

Psychological, philosophical, and political texts (such as, famously, the U.S. Declaration of Independence) espouse happiness as an important priority in the lives of individuals. The field of positive psychology has produced extensive empirical support for the value of “pursuing happiness.” If “happiness” means experiencing positive emotions, then, it seems, happiness precedes a host of quality of life outcomes valued in our society.

A vast review by Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) of over 100 studies that examined happiness or some dimension of positive affect (mood, emotion, trait disposition) as an independent variable revealed strong associations between positive emotions and socially constructed markers of success. These markers included health, longevity, well-being, high income, and high social support, many of which are subsumed under contemporary conceptualizations of quality of life (Spiers & Walker, 2009). However, contrary to the “Hollywood story” of material and social success preceding positive emotions in individual lives, Lyubomirsky et al. demonstrated that the direction of causation overwhelmingly proceeds *from* positive emotions *to* quality of life. Successful people do well in life *because* they are happy, not the other way around.

Fredrickson and colleagues (see Fredrickson, 2004, for a summary) have produced a conceptually satisfying, empirically supported distal explanation for the role of positive emotions in quality of life, called the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 1998). The broaden-and-build theory posits that positive emotions contribute to quality of life through a two-stage process.

During experiences of positive emotions, individuals' thinking and behavior becomes more generalized, flexible, and open. This "broadening" facilitates discovery and accumulation of valuable physical, social, and intellectual resources. Individuals "build" these resources, which outlast experiences of positive emotions, over time. These resources can then be used to protect against and recover from negative events and circumstances (e.g., social play such as joking building social skills and friendships, or knowledge needed for a leisure activity mitigating the impact of declining physical health). Over time, frequently emotionally positive individuals "build" a variety of these resources, becoming resilient in the face of hardship (Cohn et al., 2009). The broaden-and-build theory has been supported by numerous experimental studies (Fredrickson, 2004; Fredrickson et al., 2008). The broaden-and-build theory is now a widely accepted explanation for the quality of life outcomes of positive emotions.

### ***Specific positive emotions are especially important***

Positive emotions are diverse and varied, and some positive emotions are believed to be more powerful than others. In the foundational paper that introduced the broaden-and-build theory, Fredrickson (1998) discussed four important positive emotions: love, joy, interest, and contentment. In subsequent writings (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009), she also mentions the positive emotions of pride and gratitude. Other psychologists (Ekman, 1992, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003) have written about the positive emotion of awe. Extant theoretical and empirical work has, however, given love, joy, interest, and contentment the most attention.

Love, as Fredrickson (1998) defines it, consists of other positive emotions in the specific context of relationships. Feeling pride in a child's achievement or excitement about a friend's hobbies are examples of love. According to Oatley and Jenkins (1996), such feelings prompt people to explore, understand, and know each other, strengthening relationships over time.

Relationships, in turn, are considered a social resource (Fredrickson, 1998) and important in the lives of happy people (Diener & Seligman, 2002).

Interest, according to Izard (1977), is the default and most common human emotion. Akin to curiosity and excitement, feeling interested prompts an individual to explore (although Ekman, 2003, calls the emotion *excitement* and the urges to explore *interest*). According to Fredrickson (1998), exploration is “explicitly and actively aimed at increasing knowledge of and experience with the target of interest” (p. 305). Such exploration builds intellectual resources such as knowledge as well as personal growth (Izard, 1977).

Based on the influential work of Izard (1977) and Ekman (1992), Fredrickson (1998) writes that joy “is used interchangeably with *happiness*” (original emphasis, p. 304) and overlaps with amusement, elation, and gladness. Fredrickson refers to Frijda’s (2007) account of joy as prompting free activation, the readiness to engage in play or other creative self-expression. The long-term benefits of play behavior and playfulness in children are well established (see Barnett, 1991) but also applicable to adults (Mitas, Qian, & Yarnal, 2007). Fredrickson (1998) points out that multiple forms of play (e.g., physical play, imaginative play) foster multiple resources (e.g., physical fitness, cognitive skills).

Compared to love, joy, and interest, contentment is a low-activation emotion, meaning that it is accompanied by relatively minimal arousal (Russell, 2003). According to Fredrickson, (1998), the low level of activation associated with contentment contrasts it from joy and sensual pleasure. Fredrickson instead links contentment to feelings of tranquility, serenity, or relief. Unlike joy, interest, and love, contentment shifts a person’s thoughts rather than changing their behavior. Fredrickson (1998) writes that contentment “prompts individuals to savor their current life circumstances and recent successes, experience ‘oneness’ with the world around them, and integrate recent events and achievements into their overall self-concept and world view” (p. 306). This cognitive broadening empowers individuals to see their circumstances in a positive light and

integrate them into a more mature, complex sense of self, an important psychological resource (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004).

Specific positive emotions jump-start distinct broadening and building processes, resulting in unique personal resources that interlock to create quality of life (Cohn et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important to consider each positive emotion individually, in addition to considering positive emotions more generally. Furthermore, each positive emotion has a unique degree of personal meaning, where personal meaning is “information that contributes to individuals’ understanding of themselves *vis-à-vis* the world around them” (Fredrickson, 2000, p. 589). Fredrickson illustrates this point by contrasting sensory pleasure (a positive emotion of low meaning) to love (a positive emotion of high meaning). More meaningful positive emotions, such as love, are more likely to motivate changes in thinking and behavior, such as broadening and building (Fredrickson, 2000). A positive emotion low in meaning (anticipation of food when hungry) did not broaden attention scope in a recent laboratory study (Harmon-Jones & Gable, 2009). Therefore, distinguishing between less meaningful and more meaningful positive emotions is crucial to understanding their long-term outcomes.

Additionally, Fredrickson (2000) argues that meaningful positive emotions are closely linked to a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life overall. Fredrickson suggests that joy, interest, and love are positive emotions that often carry high meaning. The level of meaning carried by contentment depends on the subject of the emotion; i.e., what an individual feels content *about*. Fredrickson concludes that distinguishing between different positive emotions based on their meaningfulness is necessary to understand the processes that give rise to positive emotions and, ultimately, quality of life.

Challenges in emotion measurement are compounded for distinct, meaningful positive emotions due to decades of inattention to positive emotions in psychology research (Ekman, 2003). Self-report scales remain the standard for measuring positive emotions experiences (Gilbert, 2003). While particular positive emotions have greatly differing physiological

manifestations (Ekman, 2003), the visible expressions of positive emotions can be difficult to distinguish based on meaning (Ekman, 1992). Therefore, measuring by self-report is necessary (Fredrickson, 2000; Gilbert, 2006).

### ***Positive emotions can be increased***

On the heels of the finding that positive emotions, especially those high in meaning, build quality of life, positive psychologists have undertaken vigorous research programs to experimentally boost individuals' positive emotions. These research programs have led to at least two self-help books written for a popular audience (Fredrickson, 2009; Lyubomirsky, 2008) that promise increases in positive emotions based on scientific findings. Behaviors that these works urge include meditation, which has been verified using a large experimental program of meditation classes (Fredrickson et al., 2008), keeping journals of gratitude and other positive emotions, and writing letters to people who have been influential in one's life. From this research, it is clear that despite a large genetic component to average levels of positive emotions over time (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004), it is possible to boost individuals' positive emotions in a long-term way (Etcoff, 2007). Additionally, these studies use rigorous methods, including specific, low-burden measurements of positive emotions (e.g., mDES, Fredrickson et al., 2008) and field experimental designs that document day-to-day development of positive emotions (e.g., Fredrickson et al., 2008; Cohn et al., 2009). Such designs make it possible to accurately capture participants' positive emotional experiences and to analyze distinct positive emotions separately, which is in turn important to understanding the long-term outcomes of positive emotions. Unfortunately, while thorough, these designs are not comprehensive. They use lists of emotions prepared by researchers and, therefore, miss the opportunity to examine participants' words and interpretations. Perhaps participants' words and interpretations might bring new positive emotions

to light or show linguistic differences in how participants and researchers talk about positive emotions.

Research programs to boost positive emotions are relatively new and the best ways to boost positive emotions are still being studied. While programs espoused by Fredrickson (2009) and Lyubomirsky (2008) show promise, the links between the programs and increases in positive emotions are inconsistent. The authors (Fredrickson, 2009; Lyubomirsky, 2008) urge readers to find individual solutions to increase positive emotions in their own lives. While leisure, especially “active leisure” emerged from one study (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006) as a way that individuals already use to foster positive emotions, leisure *travel* is missing entirely from this body of research. This is surprising considering tourism research suggesting that leisure travel is emotionally positive (e.g., Graburn, 2001; Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, & Vingerhoets, 2010). A systematic empirical account of positive emotions in a leisure travel context is absent from the positive psychology literature. I subsequently argue that positive emotions associated with leisure travel may contribute to quality of life, and that this effect may be especially pronounced for mature adults. Not only are mature adults frequent travelers (Blazey, 1992; Zimmer, Brayerly, & Searle, 1995), but they hold a unique place of interest for positive psychology researchers, because they experience relatively high levels of positive emotions (e.g., Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999; Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990).

Additionally, studies to boost positive emotions are, with few exceptions (e.g., Mitas, Qian, & Yarnal, 2007; Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006), bounded by research designs that do not allow participants to describe or interpret their experiences in their own words. When the only information about positive emotions are participants’ ratings on quantitative Likert-type scales, excluding the researchers’ position in the research process, important information may be missed or limited by the imposition of the researchers’ subjective perspective over those of participants (Dupuis, 1999; Henderson, 2006). In research of positive emotions, this information may consist

of specific positive emotions or processes associated with positive emotions that researchers have not yet conceptualized.

***Mature adults automatically increase positive emotions via social context***

Populations of Western countries are in a demographic shift toward older age and longer life expectancy. This trend has brought attention to older adults' positive emotions, resulting in two key findings: older adults experience greater levels of positive emotions (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998), and a process of interacting with one's social context, known as *socioemotional selectivity*, explains how the aging process fosters increasing positive emotions (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999). This research shares two significant shortcomings with the positive psychology research discussed previously. Mature adults' leisure travel experiences have not been considered in studies of their positive emotions, and these studies exclude participants' words and interpretations of their positive emotional experiences.

A seminal study of emotions across the lifespan (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998) overturned the long-held notion that emotional decline follows physical decline, with mature adults becoming increasingly "grouchy" with age. Mroczek and Kolarz, in contrast, found that positive emotions increased with age. Other studies have supported their findings (e.g., Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008; Carstensen et al., 1999). Strenger (2009) has argued that developmental increases in positive emotions may begin in midlife. Experimental research has emerged in positive psychology to explain how aging leads to increased levels of positive emotions. The product of this research is *socioemotional selectivity theory* (Carstensen et al., 1999; Carstensen & Mikels, 2005), which explains increases in positive emotions in terms of mature adults' interactions with their social contexts.

Socioemotional selectivity theory is based on the idea that as individuals age, they begin to see their life as limited by time (Carstensen et al., 1999). They think of their life as having a



finite span of time, with the end (death) in sight. Perceiving time as limited shifts individuals' priorities. Instead of prioritizing the pursuit of information and knowledge, individuals shift their attentions to affective goals, such as pursuit of positive emotions (Carstensen & Mikels, 2005). Interactions with others are a dependable source for positive emotional experiences. As a result, according to socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen et al., 1999; Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990), mature adults, who perceive their time as limited, put their energy into social interactions within established relationships (i.e., close friends and family). In doing so, they sacrifice effort that could be spent to gain new knowledge to instead boost their positive emotions. Fredrickson and Carstensen (1990) as well as Carstensen et al. (1999) found that mature adults were more likely than young adults to state a preference to spend time with familiar (as opposed to novel) social partners. Numerous subsequent studies (e.g., Isaacowitz, 2005; Isaacowitz, Toner, Goren, & Wilson, 2003; Charles, Mather, & Carstensen, 2003) have upheld socioemotional selectivity theory as a whole. None of these studies, however, considered leisure travel settings.

Some researchers have extended socioemotional selectivity theory to leisure contexts, showing that mature adults not only invest in existing relationships but build new ones as well (Kerstetter, Yarnal, Son, Yen, & Baker, 2008), and that isolated mature adults value social contexts especially highly (Nichols, 2010). The state of knowledge about socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that mature adults use their social contexts to engender positive emotions. This linkage between social context and positive emotions has not been tested in leisure travel settings, however. Furthermore, studies supporting socioemotional selectivity theory use research paradigms that exclude participants' words and interpretations (Dupuis, 1999; Henderson, 2006). As a result, they may have missed important positive emotions and associated processes that further explain the connections between positive emotions and aging. If these two shortcomings are addressed, socioemotional selectivity theory holds potential to explain how

mature adults build quality of life from the social contexts of tourism experiences (Dann, 2001; Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009).

### ***Summary of positive emotion research***

A decade of positive emotion research has produced four compelling findings. First, positive emotions build enduring quality of life. Second, different positive emotions build quality of life in distinct ways, with some contributing more than others. Third, it is possible to increase individuals' experiences of positive emotions over time. Finally, elevated levels of positive emotions in mature adults have been associated with mature adults' selective interactions in their social contexts. Therefore, research to support and increase positive emotional experiences continues to hold promise, especially in the social contexts of mature adults. However, this research is hampered by the positive psychologists' persistent neglect of leisure travel as a context for positive emotions. Furthermore, research of positive emotions has exclusively used experimental and survey research based on closed-ended, quantitative measurement of positive emotions. While such measurements are reliable and valid, they may miss the full breadth of positive emotional experience that participants' words and interpretations could capture.

The sum of the positive emotion research has established the value of positive emotions and, in mature adults, the value of social contexts *to* positive emotions. An important next step is to explore the processes that foster and result from positive emotions in leisure travel. Positive emotions associated with leisure travel hold particular significance for the population of mature adults, which has garnered attention not only in positive psychology but in tourism research as well.

## **Mature adult leisure travel, positive emotions, and quality of life**

### ***Mature adults form an important population of leisure travelers***

Numerous tourism researchers (e.g., Blazey, 1992; Hawes, 1988; Zimmer, Brayerly, & Searle, 1995) assert that mature adults travel more often, farther, and stay longer, and spend more money on leisure travel than any other age segment of the population. However, the experiences of mature leisure travelers are still relatively uncharted territory. Any resulting benefits of leisure travel to the mature adults themselves, rather than to marketers or managers, are therefore not well known. Positive emotions, in particular, are thought to be a central benefit of the leisure travel experience (Graburn, 2001). With the rapid aging of the Western population, according to Dann (2001), such benefits are in need of research.

Research concerning mature adults' motivations to engage in leisure travel exists. Findings of existing studies (e.g., Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002; Norman, Daniels, McGuire, & Norman, 2001; Pennington-Gray & Lane, 2001) are somewhat ambiguous about mature adults' reasons for traveling. In general, however, motivating factors for mature adult leisure travel include culture (Szucs, Daniels, & McGuire, 2001), novelty (Sangpikul, 2008), and spending time with family and friends (Blazey, 1992; Norman et al., 2001). Mature adults often prefer mass leisure travel experiences (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002; Lehto, O'Leary, & Lee, 2001) and seek value as well as quality (Lehto et al., 2001). Mature adult leisure travel preferences and behaviors differ according to retirement status (Norman et al., 2001), generation (Lehto, Jang, Achana, & O'Leary, 2008; Litman, 2006), gender (Lehto et al., 2001), age (e.g., Eby & Molnar, 2001; Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Zimmer, et al., 1995), psychological needs (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002), and preferred lodging (Lieux, Weaver, & McCleary, 1994). The marketing or management orientations of these studies have neglected mature adults' leisure travel experiences, and therefore omitted any potential benefits of leisure travel to mature adults, such as positive emotions.

A groundbreaking study by Nimrod (2008) did not share this marketing focus, and revealed complex relationships between retirement status and leisure travel. However, Nimrod's study did not address mature adults' leisure travel experiences in detail, neglecting positive emotions altogether. This is unfortunate because positive emotions are increasingly important in the social psychology of aging (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998) and have emerged as an important benefit of leisure for mature adults (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002; Mitas et al., 2008). For a background understanding of positive emotions associated with leisure travel, it is necessary to look beyond research of the mature adult population.

### ***Positive emotions and leisure travel***

Existing research links leisure travel to positive emotions. Cross-sectional survey studies suggest that individuals generally associate positive emotions with leisure travel experiences (e.g., Duman & Mattila, 2004; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu, 2010). Honing in on positive emotions during the leisure travel experience, however, requires examining day-to-day development of positive emotions, because positive emotions are, by definition, short-lived (Fredrickson, 2004; Oatley & Jenkins, 1996; Rosenberg, 1998), while leisure travel lasts, by definition, at least one day (World Tourism Organization, 1994).

Furthermore, since Clawson and Knetsch asserted in 1966 that nature-based leisure travel affects individuals' emotions before and after the experience, it has been widely acknowledged that the positive emotional effects of leisure travel are not limited to the days spent traveling. Clawson and Knetsch described five psychological "phases" to nature-based leisure travel: anticipation, travel to destination, experience, travel from destination, and recollection. According to Clawson and Knetsch, each of these phases contains unique opportunities to experience positive emotions.

Empirical evidence of the development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel is tentative, however. In 1987, Mannell and Iso-Ahola pointed out that “leisure theorists and researchers have given much more theoretical and empirical consideration to the nature of leisure experiences than tourism scholars have the phenomenology of tourism” (p. 518). Twenty years later, the state of knowledge suggests that leisure travel is emotionally positive and follows a multiphase developmental process, featuring increasing positive emotions before leisure travel, elevated positive emotions during leisure travel, and declining positive emotions after leisure travel. This developmental process is referred to here as *the peak model* of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel (Figure 1-2). Three groups of studies have produced empirical evidence in support of the peak model: early research of nature-based leisure travel (Hammit, 1980; More & Payne, 1978), research of health tourism in Austria (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000, 2004a, 2004b), and population research in the Netherlands (Nawijn, 2009; Nawijn et al., 2010). A single study of American college students produced findings inconsistent with the peak model (Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003).

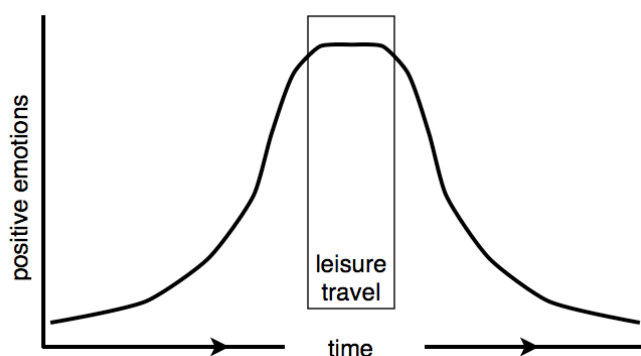


Figure 1-2: The peak model of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel.

The existing research that addresses the development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel lacks rigor. Specifically, the studies that comprise this

body of research are incomplete across time, either measuring too infrequently or missing an important period of time (before, during, or after leisure travel). Also, this research has not measured specific positive emotions, but instead measured positive moods, which are not as powerful as positive emotions, or positive affect, a more general construct that conflates emotions and moods.

While not based on empirical findings, Graburn's (2001) theoretical essay about leisure travel as secular ritual independently contributes insights on the development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. The thrust of Graburn's essay is to assert leisure travel as a modern-day, secular ritual to mark the passage of time. However, he also contributes to the discussion of positive emotions by describing *specific* positive emotions associated with individuals' experiences before, during, and after leisure travel as "something positive...that they cannot easily experience at home" (p. 45).

Before leisure travel, according to Graburn (2001), travelers experience "rituals of preparation" (p. 46) such as packing and booking excursions. These rituals create a "happy anticipation," an experience of joy (p. 45). Then, once they arrive at their destination, travelers enter an experience apart from everyday life, uniquely "exciting" and filled with interest (p. 45). Upon their return home, travelers experience a decline in positive emotions, in what Graburn calls "a bittersweet ending" (p. 45). Graburn's assertions are generally consistent with the peak model, and imply interesting distinctions between specific positive emotions such as joy and interest. The idea that specific positive emotions have differentiated roles before, during, and after leisure travel is altogether untested, however.

In addition to the measurement shortcomings discussed, existing research linking positive emotions to leisure travel before, during, and after the experience has a substantial theoretical flaw. This research lacks measurement of processes that may

explain *how* leisure travel creates positive emotions. What is it about a leisure trip that makes it emotionally positive, enjoyable, fun? A number of positive psychology studies (e.g., Diener & Seligman, 2002; Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006), especially those focused on mature adults (Carstensen et al., 1999; Carstensen & Mikels, 2005) have implicated individuals' social contexts in fostering positive emotions. These findings raise the possibility that the social contexts of leisure travel are key to the links between leisure travel and positive emotions discussed above.

### ***Ethnographies of tourists' social contexts uncover positive emotions***

A number of ethnographies of social contexts in leisure travel have produced tentative evidence linking social contexts to positive emotions. These studies carry two shortcomings, however. First, like research linking leisure travel to positive emotions, these studies fail to specify or explain the full breadth of positive emotions present. Second, because these studies do not focus on positive emotions, the processes that connect social contexts of leisure travel to positive emotions are unknown. This is unfortunate, because as we have seen, positive emotions are central to the experience of tourism (Graburn, 2001) and are key to quality of life (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Ethnographies of social contexts in leisure travel have focused on relationships between social contexts and play (Lett, 1983; Yarnal, 2005), space (Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005), liminality (Lett, 1983; Wickens, 2002), *communitas* (Sharpe, 2002), and self-improvement (Foster, 1986).

These studies are interspersed with references to positive emotions. In Schuchat's (1983) ethnography of multiple tour groups to destinations worldwide, participants experienced feelings of "warmth" (p. 465) in each others' company. Yarnal's study of a cruise group (Yarnal, 2005; Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005) found that a tightly knit group of participants felt "upbeat," (p. 358) and found the experience "enjoyable" and "relaxing" (p. 362). Participants who exhibited too

many negative emotions, instead of highly-encouraged positive emotions, were even asked to “shape up or ship out” (p. 362). In another study of a cruising “society” (p. 215) Foster (1986) found that participants “relaxed” (p. 223); experienced “enjoyment” (p. 230), “pleasure,” (p. 228), and “interest” (p. 231), especially in the activities at destinations. In a third study of boating tourists, Lett (1983) found that participants “enjoyed” (p. 40) “delightful” mischief (p. 42) as well as “conviviality”(p. 44). In a group nature-based travel context, Sharpe (2005) documented “fun” (p. 264), relaxation, and “positive atmosphere” (p. 267). Wickens (2002) demonstrated that vacationing on a Greek island “thrilled” (p. 838) or “relaxed” (p. 839) participants who were searching for romantic relationships.

These ethnographies of social contexts in leisure travel show tentative evidence of positive emotions. Furthermore, these works suggest that elements of the social context of leisure travel—norms within a traveling group, interesting activities, and the pursuit of romantic relationships—could support positive emotions in leisure travel experiences. It is not clear, however, *how* group norms, interesting activities, or pursuit of romantic relationships create positive emotions. It is also unclear, again, which positive emotions participants experience, and why those and not others are present.

What happens in individuals’ lives after emotionally positive leisure travel is also not well known. Existing research does not address beneficial outcomes that may follow positive emotions associated with leisure travel. Positive psychology research has found that quality of life is an outcome of positive emotions (e.g., Cohn et al., 2009; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), so it is possible that positive emotions in leisure travel contribute to quality of life. Indeed, leisure travel has been implicated in quality of life outcomes.



### *Leisure travel is linked to quality of life*

Sonmez and Apostolopoulos (2009) have summarized the literature on leisure travel and quality of life, with a focus on physical health as a quality of life outcome. They cite studies from public health and health tourism research to assert that leisure travel experiences are beneficial to physical and psychological health (Chikani, Reding, Gunderson, & McCarty, 2005; Eaker, Pinsky, & Castelli, 1992; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Gump & Mathews, 2002; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1985; Milman, 1998; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000, 2004a, 2004b; Westman & Etzion, 2002). These studies report that leisure travel, measured as vacation participation or frequency, predicts a variety of quality of life outcomes. Strengths of these studies are their longitudinal and sometimes quasi-experimental designs, which make it possible to show that leisure travel is the antecedent, rather than merely a correlate, of quality of life outcomes.

A detailed examination of this research, however, reveals measurement problems analogous to those seen in studies of positive emotions in leisure travel. All of the above studies either use a uni-dimensional measure of quality of life (usually the presence of a specific disease). Additionally, while Sonmez and Apostolopoulos (2009) interpret all of the above studies as dealing with leisure travel, some of these studies operationalize leisure travel as simply time off from work (Westman & Etzion, 2002; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000), which, in turn, does not guarantee that participants actually traveled. Finally, the studies do not reveal the mechanisms, such as positive emotions, by which leisure travel may contribute to quality of life. Even if variables akin to positive emotions are measured, they are not analyzed as a potential mechanism of quality of life (e.g., Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000; 2004a).

Gilbert and Abdullah (2002), Lounsbury and Hoopes (1985), and Milman (1998) come the closest to linking leisure travel experiences to a more global, encompassing concept of quality of life. Their measurement of life satisfaction (Lounsbury & Hoopes),

subjective well-being (Gilbert & Abdullah), and happiness (Milman) parallels research from the positive psychology literature on quality of life in terms of life satisfaction, subjective well-being, or happiness. The outcomes measured by Milman as well as Lounsbury and Hoopes, however, omit social and health-related components of quality of life. Furthermore, none of the three studies demonstrate the mechanisms by which leisure travel may increase well-being. Indeed, Sonmez and Apostolopoulos (2009) recommend that future studies use rigorous, developmental psychometric designs to link together leisure travel experiences, mechanisms of quality of life, and a breadth of quality of life outcomes.

***Summary of tourism research on mature adults, positive emotions, and quality of life***

Tourism research has created a promising but incomplete picture of positive emotions, their antecedents, and their outcomes in the context of leisure travel. Positive emotions are lacking altogether from studies of mature adult travelers, the present study's population of interest. Leisure travel more generally is linked to positive emotions. Furthermore, development in positive emotions occurs not only during leisure travel, but before and after. The preponderance of evidence addressing such development suggests a *peak model*, which portrays positive emotions as increasing before leisure travel, peaking during leisure travel, and declining after. This evidence, however, lacks specific measures of positive emotions and features incomplete measurement across time. Therefore, the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel is unknown. Furthermore, this body of research does not suggest *how* specific positive emotions come about in leisure travel.

Positive emotions have emerged in ethnographies of social contexts in leisure travel, suggesting that social contexts may hold the key to processes that foster positive emotions. These processes are unexplored, however. Furthermore, ethnographies of social contexts in leisure travel

research have neglected to describe or explain the full breadth of specific positive emotions that participants may or may not experience. Therefore, *how* positive emotions arise from leisure travel experiences is unknown.

The outcomes of positive emotions during leisure travel are also not well understood. Leisure travel has been linked with quality of life, the demonstrated long-term outcome of positive emotions. These variables, however, have not been linked in the same study. In other words, existing research has not explored the possibility that positive emotions arising from leisure travel are a *mechanism* of quality of life.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation is to apply theory from positive psychology to understand the processes fostering and resulting from positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. To address this purpose, I ask four research questions:

1. Which positive emotions are most salient in the experience of leisure travel?
2. Which processes arising from the social context of leisure travel foster positive emotions?
3. Is the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel consistent with the *peak model*, with positive emotions increasing before leisure travel, remaining elevated during the experience, and declining after?
4. Does leisure contribute to quality of life, and if so, are positive emotions the mechanism of that change?

## **Research design and methods**

### **Mixed-method approach**

The present study uses a concurrent mixed-method research design, meaning that multiple methods of simultaneous data collection are used to address related research questions (Creswell, 2003). A concurrent mixed-method design was chosen for two reasons. First, the shortcomings of existing research on positive emotions and leisure travel necessitated mixed measurement of positive emotions. Positive psychology research uses psychometric methods that exclude participants' words and interpretations (Dupuis, 1999; Henderson, 2006), while tourism research generally fails to measure positive emotions precisely. The approaches of each field towards measurement of positive emotions are incomplete. Second, as all research methods have inherent limitations (Bernard, 2006), the strengths of some methods can compensate for the limitations of others. For example, psychometric research (e.g., Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson, 2004) rigorously measures a range of positive emotions, but excludes participants' interpretations of their emotions (Henderson, 2006), raising the possibility that important positive emotions are excluded from psychometric findings. However, interpretive research pursues and utilizes participants' interpretations. The use of interpretive methods invites participants to raise issues not covered by psychometric measures. In this way, the use of multiple methods can create a more complete picture of the phenomena under study, a process known as methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2003).

The two method approaches applied concurrently in the present study are developmental psychometry and interpretive microethnography. Developmental study designs measure the same group of participants repeatedly over time (Ram & Grimm, 2007). Psychometric research uses self-report scales and observations to quantify and

compare mental experiences within and between participants (Murphy & Davidshofer, 1994).

Interpretive research, in contrast, assumes multiple perspectives between participants and researchers. I included an interpretive perspective in my design for two reasons. First, acknowledging multiple perspectives was key to observing participants' actions (e.g., conversations and exchanges in which positive emotions played a part) according to their own points of view (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Second, incorporating rather than attempting to hide my role in the data collection and analysis processes (Dupuis, 1999) allowed me to experience participants' circumstances for myself and not impose my ideas (e.g., about which positive emotions are most important) on participants' interpretations of their experiences.

*Ethnography* is the study of values and ideas that groups of people find important (Creswell, 2007; Emerson et al., 1995). Most ethnography involves prolonged (months to years) involvement in the study context (Creswell, 2007). A "microethnography" (Passariello, 1983, p. 109) uses ethnographic methods to study groups of people that form and dissolve over short periods of time, such as a group of travelers who had not met previously going on a cruise, which Foster (1986) calls "a short-lived society" (p. 215). A microethnography, therefore, is much shorter in terms of time that researchers spend in the study context, but equal in conceptual depth and richness to a conventional ethnography. Microethnographies have made valuable contributions to tourism theory based on 2- (Passariello, 1983) to 23-day (Foster, 1986) leisure travel experiences.

## Sample

This study uses a purposeful sample (Schutt, 2006; Trochim, 2006) of two mature adult leisure travel experiences. A purposeful sample is a non-probability sample selected according to criteria that are relevant to research questions and study design (Schutt, 2006). I selected the two experiences based on theoretical and logistical criteria important to the study: both involved an overnight stay away from home, a necessary condition for leisure travel (World Tourism Organization, 1994), both involved mostly mature adult participants, leaders of both experiences indicated to me that participants would be willing to fill out questionnaires and to be observed, and the dates of both experiences were determined far enough ahead of time to permit data collection.

Because purposeful samples are non-probability samples, findings based on purposeful samples are not readily generalizable to larger populations (Trochim, 2006). However, existing studies that address development of positive emotions in leisure travel over time (e.g., Hammitt, 1980; Wirtz et al., 2003), positive emotions in older adults (e.g., Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1999; Isaacowitz, 2005), quality of life outcomes of positive emotions (e.g., Fredrickson et al., 2009; Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2005), and quality of life outcomes of leisure travel (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000, 2004b) all use non-probability samples. It is logistically almost impossible to create a probability sample of participants in leisure travel experiences because no comprehensive list of leisure travel experiences exists. Therefore, a purposeful sample was the most appropriate kind of sample for the present study.

I sampled two groups of leisure travel participants: individuals participating in the War Between the States Learning Tour (WBSLT) and individuals participating in the Sandhills Freeflight Model Airplane Competition (SFMAC). In the following sections, I describe the two experiences in detail, discuss core activities, my position in the group, location, and the leadership structure of each experience.

## **War Between the States Learning Tour**

### ***Description of the experience***

The War Between the States Learning Tour originated 17 years ago as a product offering from the Alumni Association travel agency at university located in the northeastern US. It was conceived to bring together experts from the university, surrounding community, and elsewhere in conjunction with Civil War enthusiast alumni in a well-orchestrated visit to a Civil War battlefield. A different battlefield has been visited every year. The first trip went to Gettysburg in 1992. Although the WBSLT has returned to Gettysburg a number of times, the program has also gone as far afield as Tennessee (Shiloh) and Mississippi (Vicksburg). Some sites are more successful (in terms of participants' satisfaction) than others, and the best sites have been frequently repeated.

### ***Core activities***

The tour itself takes place over the course of four days, including a half-day allotted to travel to the destination and a half-day for travel back. Participants within a day's drive of the tour usually drive a car to the location, while those further afield fly in. Participants all stay at a common hotel in a block of rooms reserved by the tour director. The program commences just after lunch on a Thursday. Participants gradually arrive at the hotel and some meet and chat in the lobby. The program director officially inaugurates the tour in a common room at the hotel. The program and the battle are then introduced at the hotel in three lectures, one by each assisting instructor. This introductory presentation lasts about two and one half hours. Participants then move into a ballroom in the hotel for introductions and dinner, which last another two hours. The evening concludes with a lecture from the head instructor.

The second and third days of the tour (Friday and Saturday) begin in early morning. At 7 a.m., participants board two chartered tour buses. After buses drive to the battlefield, participants hike the battlefield sites while listening to instructors lecture, often covering the events of the battle in chronological order. The tour buses transport participants between distant portions of the battlefield and meal sites. Generally, intervals of lecture and hiking last for fifteen to thirty minutes, with bus rides lasting as long as one hour. Lunches over the two days are served in the field at community picnic sites. Dinners are served in country clubs or restaurants. The official program concludes around 8 p.m. each day with a bus ride from dinner back to the hotel. According to the tour director, however, some participants continue to socialize in the hotel lobby or in bars into the night. The final (Sunday) morning involves a question-and-answer session with instructors at a common room in the hotel. This session lasts for approximately two hours. The tour then concludes with a brief pitch for the coming year's tour from the program director. At the time of this year's WBSLT, I was relatively new to the study of Civil War history, and my experience as a participant observer was my first time attending this tour.

### ***Location***

In 2009, the WBSLT turned its sights to the Second Battle of Bull Run, known to the Confederacy as the Second Battle of Manassas. A National Battlefield Park covers the land on which this battle was fought. While verdant and rural in character, the historic site is adjacent to the 19th-century downtown of Manassas, Virginia, which is now considered to be a part of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.



### ***Leadership***

Two individuals are crucial to the leadership of the WBSLT. A Program Planner for the Alumni Associations has directed the WBSLT for all of its 17 years. The director's role concerns the logistical and support aspects of the experience, such as selecting and booking restaurants for meals, selecting and booking the hotel, accounting, following the tour buses in a support vehicle, and introducing participants to each other and to the instructors. The head instructor of the WBSLT has been lecturing about battles on the tour since its inception. She has been the head of the instructing team for nine years, and is a professor of history at the university that sanctions the WBSLT. She told the group of participants that she was on the tour because "the Civil War rocks." The director and head instructor have had a close working relationship over the past 17 years.

### ***My position in the group***

My position as a white male 26-year-old graduate student set me apart from the group. Participants were aware of my research and often used my study as an initial subject of conversation. Therefore, the fact that I was studying the WBSLT experience helped me to fit in, because it explained why a younger and less wealthy individual like myself would be on the tour.

### **Sandhills Freeflight Model Airplane Contest**

#### ***Description of the experience***

SFMAC is a one-day contest for flying model airplanes that has taken place twice a year for twenty years. SFMAC is a contest that features a now-rare branch of the model airplane

hobby known as “free flight.” Free flight model airplanes are “free” to fly wherever aerodynamic forces and the wind take them and are not controlled remotely. Some models flown at SFMAC are either thrown or launched into the air (“gliders”). Others are powered by tightly wound rubber bands that turn their propellers (“rubber powered”).

At free flight contests like the SFMAC, the object is to get the longest possible flight. Each contest features several competition categories (henceforth “events”) that pit similar models against one another. Some events, known as “scale events,” also concern the resemblance of the model to a full-size aircraft. The rubber-powered models at SFMAC are built from a framework of balsa wood and covered with specially treated tissue paper. The gliders are usually built from solid sheets of balsa wood sanded to shape and sealed. Participants are required to build their own models.

### ***Core activities***

The SFMAC begins at various occasions for various participants. Local participants may arrive on the morning of the contest, or they may gather on the prior evening to fly models at a suburban pond near one participant’s home in Goldsboro, N.C. Participants from further away (northern and central Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the Washington, D.C. area) arrive the evening before the contest. As with local participants, some of them gather to fly models at the pond in Goldsboro. Later in the evening, they drive to Fayetteville, N.C., the nearest sizable city, and independently check into a hotel or motel for the night.

All participants drive to the contest the following morning. Participants arrive at the site between 8 and 10 a.m. in their own or in carpoled vehicles. There is a small dirt path in the field at a right angle to the two-lane road that makes the field accessible to automobiles. The participants park to one side of this dirt path, forming a line of 10-20 vehicles. Many of the vehicles are vans, and the hatches and trunks stay open all day. Additionally, some participants

bring folding chairs and canopies which they set up directly behind their vehicles. The contest directors also set up a large table and easel behind their vehicle where participants sign up, pay a \$5 entry fee, and post their flight scores over the course of the contest.

The SFMAC features events that are administered in two different ways. Some events are “timed” and others are “mass launch.” Timed events involve competition throughout the day between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. When a participant wishes to enter a flight into timed event competition, (s)he asks a fellow participant (the “timer”) to keep time with a stopwatch, walks out to a convenient location on the field, and releases the model. The timer then records the duration of flight. Usually, participants must enter 3-5 flight times for every event to compete. At any moment during the day, between 2 and 5 participants were flying models for timed events.

Once every hour between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., however, timed flying is interrupted for mass launch events. In a mass launch event, all competitors fly their airplanes at the same instant. Over the course of several rounds, the airplane that comes down last wins. The airplanes in each mass launch must conform to a predetermined, common era and general aircraft type. For example, one mass launch event features modern civil aircraft. In two other Mass Launches, fighting aircraft from the first and second World Wars are represented.

When not flying for a timed event, participants work alone or in small groups on their airplanes. Participants alternate between adjusting and preparing their airplanes directly behind their vehicles, test flying the models nearby, and walking across the field to retrieve their models. Participants pause to make conversation with fellow participants throughout the experience.

By 3 p.m. in the afternoon, several participants cease flying models on account of physical exhaustion and sit on or near their vehicles to observe the action. Others, especially if they live far away, depart. At 4:30 p.m., competitive flying officially ends and the contest directors determine the winners. Participants then gather and sit or stand in the grass. Contest directors announce the first, second, and third place winners of each event and award small “trophies” (mounted or framed printouts with images of models and event names) as the group

applauds. After this brief ceremony, most participants depart, although some remain and fly models until sunset.

### ***Location***

The SFMAC takes place in rural southern North Carolina on a sod (residential lawn grass) farm. The sod farm-field is a highly desirable site for model aviation (large, flat, with cut grass, and no trees to snag airplanes). There is a small dirt path in the field at a right angle to the two-lane road that provides automobile access. The participants park to one side of this dirt path, forming a line of 10-20 vehicles. Many of the vehicles are vans, and their hatches and trunks are propped open all day. Some participants bring folding chairs and canopies that they set up directly behind their vehicles. The contest directors also set up a large table and easel behind their vehicle where participants sign up, pay a \$5 entry fee, and post their flight scores over the course of the contest. A rented portable toilet stands adjacent to the line of cars.

### ***Leadership***

SFMAC is administered by two model airplane clubs, one based in North Carolina and the other in Washington D.C. The clubs administer competition rules created by larger national organizations. The D.C. club has historically administered the SFMAC contests. The administration is now divided, with the D.C. club organizing the Fall SFMAC and the North Carolina club administering the Spring SFMAC. The North Carolina club members have historically brokered permission to use field for the contest, as well as the portable toilet for each contest. Typically, between one and three members of the administering club volunteer to direct the contest.

### *My position in the group*

My position in SFMAC was that of a white male 26-year-old model flyer with substantial experience in model airplane competition. I had attended many previous SFMAC contests. Therefore, SFMAC participants saw me as more participant than observer. Participants were eager to talk with me about model airplanes and about life in general. For example, SFMAC participants asked me about the airplanes I was flying and about how my wife was doing. Three participants also mentioned my research, however.

### **Data collection**

The psychometric portion of the study began one to three months before the leisure travel experiences with an intake email questionnaire that measured baseline quality of life and intervening between-participant variables. Quality of life was subsequently measured with three follow-up email questionnaires: immediately before leisure travel; immediately after; and, one month after. Five SFMAC participants did not have regular email access and received the questionnaires on paper by mail instead.

Positive emotions were measured using a paper booklet with daily emotion questionnaires for a sixteen-day period before, during, and after leisure travel. I included payment for participation once with the booklet containing daily emotion questionnaires, and once after the end of the study, in line with recommendations by other developmental researchers (P. Bordini, personal communication, 18 August 2009; M. Cohn, personal communication, 19 August 2009). According to the example of Fredrickson et al. (2008), participants received \$5 compensation for completing each booklet or email/mail questionnaire.

The microethnographic portion of the study began several months before leisure travel with contact with key informants. Key informants are individuals with extensive

experience in the study contexts who help researchers interpret participant behaviors (Emerson et al., 1995). Intermittent contact with key informants persisted through several months after the leisure travel experiences ended. Participant observation of each leisure travel experience commenced with travel to each site and ended with travel back from each site. The overall data collection plan is illustrated in Figure 1-3.

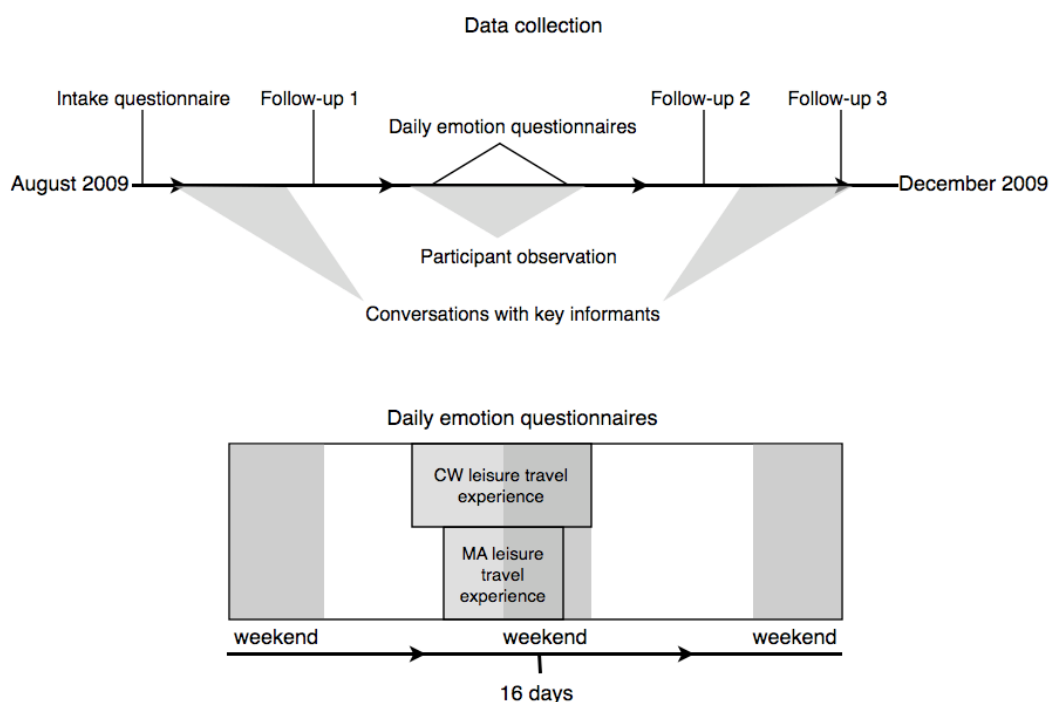


Figure 1-3: The data collection timeline.

### Psychometric procedures

Psychometric data were collected in three main components: an intake questionnaire to collect baseline quality of life data as well as between-participant variables, three follow-up questionnaires to determine change in quality of life before and after leisure travel, and a booklet of sixteen daily questionnaires to measure the day-to-

day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. These components featured state-of-the art valid and reliable measures tested and proven in analogous positive psychology field studies (e.g., Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson et al., 2008).

### *Measuring positive emotions*

Because positive emotions are brief, subjective experiences, asking participants to report on their own emotions is a “gold standard against which all other measures are measured” (Gilbert, 2006, p. 73). I measured positive emotions using a booklet with 16 daily self-report questionnaires featuring the valid and reliable modified Differential Emotions Scale (mDES; Cohn et al., 2009). The mDES, an extension of Izard’s (1977) Differential Emotions Scale, is based on a model of emotions as containing two primary dimensions, positive and negative. This model has proven useful in linking emotions to valuable outcomes, such as quality of life, because positive emotions in particular are strongly predictive (e.g., Fredrickson, 1998; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Recent interest in positive emotion research has necessitated the development of measures such as the mDES. The previously established instrument for measuring emotions on positive and negative dimensions, PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), faced the serious shortcoming of excluding low-activation positive emotions (e.g., contentment, hope). The mDES measures these emotions, as well as many of those in the PANAS (e.g., pride, interest). Though recently developed, the mDES has been extensively tested and is reliable and valid (Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson, 2009; Fredrickson et al., 2008).

### ***Measuring quality of life***

I measured quality of life using two items developed by the World Health Organization as a portion of their valid and reliable Quality of Life scales (WHOQOL; World Health Organization, 1996). The two items ask respondents to rate their satisfaction with their health and their quality of life, respectively. Each of these two items is a global, independent measure. The two items are not intended to be summed with other WHOQOL items, which measure quality of specific aspects of a respondents' life. The well-tested, widely translated WHOQOL has performed with good validity and reliability in mature adult populations (Von Steinbuchel, Lischetzke, Gruny, & Eid, 2006).

Life satisfaction captures a subjective, cognitive evaluation of quality of life that served as a supplement and comparison to the WHO items. To measure life satisfaction I used the valid and reliable Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). This time-tested scale continues to receive usage throughout the positive psychology field, is very low in participant burden with just 5 items, and exhibits excellent face validity. When first developed in 1985, this scale had good validity and reliability, and a re-assessment by Pavot & Diener (2008) confirmed its validity and reliability. The 5 items of the SWLS were assessed on a 7-point Likert-type response format.

### ***Measuring between-participant variables***

Several variables that may affect the development of positive emotions associated with leisure travel repeatedly emerge from the literature. One variable is personality. Numerous marketing studies have found that aspects of personality predict



destination choice (Nickerson & Ellis, 1991) and satisfaction (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1985). Also, because 50% or more of interindividual variation in trait affect appears to be personality-based, personality may play a significant role in the ability or capacity that certain individuals have to experience love, joy, interest, contentment, or other positive emotions in their lives (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). Therefore, I tested personality as a potential between-participant influence on day-to-day development of positive emotions associated with leisure travel.

Other important between-participant variables include age, retirement status, marital status, and gender. Each of these variables has been linked to substantial differences in leisure travel behaviors of mature adults (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002; Norman et al., 2001, Zimmer et al., 1995). I therefore measured age, retirement status, marital status, and gender and to test if they alter the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel.

### ***Psychometric analyses***

Initial analyses for data exploration consisted of calculating descriptive statistics of central tendency and distribution for each variable. These analyses showed the dependent variables (positive emotions overall, love, interest, joy, contentment, quality of life, and life satisfaction) to be approximately normally distributed. The multi-item measures of positive emotions and life satisfaction were found to be reliable.

To answer research question #1 (Is the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel consistent with the *peak model?*), I built a series of mixed-effect linear models predicting the day-to-day development of dependent variables (positive emotions overall, love, interest, joy, and contentment) within participants. Mixed-effects linear models were the best available analytic tool to address research question #1 for three reasons. First, linear mixed-effects models allow

for the nesting of occasions within participants, making for a powerful within-participant analysis (N. Ram, personal communication, 4 March 2010). Second, when well-designed, linear-mixed effects models are readily interpretable (Ram & Grimm, 2007). Finally, linear mixed-effects models make it possible to control for random variation in dependent variables between participants (Ram & Grimm, 2007).

I built developmental linear mixed-effects models in two phases—first, to test if positive emotions were higher during leisure travel than before and after, and second, to test if linear increases preceded leisure travel and linear decreases followed. In each phase of modeling, I controlled for the effects of weekends, and accounted for between-participant differences in personality, age group, leisure travel group (WBSLT or SFMAC), retirement status, and marital status.

To answer research question #4 (Does leisure travel contribute to quality of life, and if so, are positive emotions the mechanism of that change?) I first tested to within-participant change in the three quality of life measures (Satisfaction With Life Scale, World Health Organization items measuring overall quality of life and overall health) to determine if leisure travel contributes to quality of life. I carried out these within-participant tests using repeated-measures ANOVA, an appropriate analysis for repeated-measures data where measurements where significant differences between measurements are theorized (Murphy & Davidshofer, 1994). The findings of this analysis were not significant, so I did not proceed with the mediation analyses implied by the latter half of the research question.

### **Ethnographic procedures**

Ethnographic data were collected using two procedures: participant observation and conversations with key informants. These two components of ethnography (Emerson

et al., 1995) complement each other to reveal “pervasive patterns” in participants’ social contexts (Creswell, 2007, p.71). In the present study, I focused on patterns of participant behavior and interaction that fostered positive emotions.

### ***Participant observation***

According to the guidance of Emerson et al. (1995), I interspersed private moments of note-taking into my participation. Before, during, and after each experience, I wrote observations of participants’ apparent behaviors and emotions as well as my own. In writing these notes, I followed five key guidelines presented by Emerson et al. First, I focused closely on observable details. Excessive interpretation is not recommended at the stage of note-taking to prevent canceling out competing explanations for observed behaviors, which are important in analysis (Henderson, 2006). Second, I kept notes brief to avoid removing myself from participation for too long at any one moment. As Emerson et al. point out, it is better to fill in additional details later than to miss important events or interactions.

Third, I balanced note-taking and participation. Emerson et al. (1995) indicate that the tension between note-taking and participation is often challenging and must be resolved repeatedly throughout the data collection. Charmaz (2006) illustrated this tension in the context of an assisted living facility:

I thought I would be able to slip back to my room and write notes at times during the day. The administrator who had given me permission to live here held quite a different view: Institutional life trumped research roles. He insisted that I spend the days - and most evenings - participating in the residents’ activities. He informed me, ‘everyone is a therapist here’ (p. 22).

The SFMAC as well as WBSLT settings imposed similar logistical constraints on note taking. Like Charmaz (2006), I too had believed that I would be able to “slip back” into a private space and take notes throughout the day (p. 22). However, my downtime was very fragmented. I was

only able to take notes for a few minutes at a time during the day before I sensed that my participation was urgently called for. For example, on the WBSLT, I could not take notes during bus rides because of ensuing motion sickness, and instructors' lectures or conversations with participants required my attention when off the bus. At the SFMAC, around times of mass launches, I was either occupied with my own model airplanes or, more often, with those of another participant. During the brief segments of downtime, I wrote in a small notebook that I kept in my pocket. At the WBSLT, the most frequent opportunities to write occurred after getting on the bus ahead of other participants before riding to a site. At the SFMAC, I wrote between mass launches and other demands from fellow contestants in my vehicle. At both experiences, I added to my notes at least four times daily.

Fourth, I took notes in plain view of my participants. Emerson et al. (1995) indicate that attempting to hide note-taking from participants is somewhat disingenuous and usually not practical. This was the case with the WBSLT, as there were no completely private spaces available during the day. At the SFMAC, it was possible to retreat to my car to take notes, but I was nevertheless visible to some participants there. Finally, according to the guidance of Emerson et al., I supplemented my notes in detail at the end of each day. The last hour of each day was unobligated and did not contain scheduled activities. I used this time to flesh out jottings made throughout the day.

### *Conversations with key informants*

Besides participant observation, the second major component of my ethnographic data collection involved conversations with key informants. Key informants are individuals with extensive experience of participation in the study contexts (Emerson et al., 1995; Henderson, 2006). Key informants for the WBSLT included the director and head instructor. Both were middle-aged women working full-time for the University that sanctions the WBSLT. I contacted

the director several months before the WBSLT to gain access to the group. I subsequently spoke with her in person and on the phone on numerous occasions to set up data collection as well as to learn about participants' social contexts and emotions. After the WBSLT, I engaged in extensive debriefing conversations with the director as well as head instructor.

Key informants for the SFMAC included three longtime participants who held various informal leadership positions in the organization. I spoke with each monthly and at length, starting three months before and concluding two months after the SFMAC experience. To preserve rapport and naturalistic settings for conversations with key informants (Emerson et al., 1995), I did not audio record my conversations with them. Instead, I took extensive notes as soon as possible following each conversation.

I transcribed the contents of my notebook, including fieldnotes from participant observation as well as conversation with key informants, into a word processing program on my computer for analysis. At this stage, I added any details that I recalled from my experiences, carefully balancing the possibility of recall error against the added value of additional details by focusing on concrete, specific observations (Emerson et al., 1995). I entered analysis with 10,210 words of data.

### ***Thematic coding analysis***

To answer research questions #2 (Which positive emotions are most salient in the experience of leisure travel?) and #3 (Which processes arising from the social context of leisure travel foster positive emotions?) I analyzed my notes under an interpretive thematic coding framework (Braun & Clarke, 2002). Interpretive thematic coding involves an iterative, inductive search for underlying patterns in the data. I used the writings of Charmaz (2006) and Emerson et al. (1995) for guidance throughout the process. Interpretive thematic coding fits appropriately with the nature of the data, detailed in-depth fieldnotes based on subjective experience (Emerson

et al., 1995), as well as fitting with the minimal state of knowledge underlying research questions #2 and #3. Interpretive analysis is well-suited to address minimal background knowledge because the process allows theory to be created and extended inductively (Henderson, 2006).

Interpretive thematic coding has three phases. The first phase, open coding, involves line-by-line reading and naming of the data to uncover initial patterns. The second phase, focused coding, merges and eliminates initial patterns to focus on the most salient, broadly supported, and theoretically powerful patterns, which are called *themes* (Charmaz, 2006; Henderson, 2006). The third phase, theoretical coding, involves articulating relationships among themes based on evidence in the data to crystallize the theoretical contribution offered by the study. The product of theoretical coding is a visual model according to the example of Yarnal and Kerstetter (2005) illustrating themes and their relationships, as well as a body of quotes from the data to exemplify each theme. In the present study, four themes resulted.

### ***Validation***

I followed the recommendations of Creswell (2007) in undertaking four validation procedures to ensure the rigor of my analysis. These procedures included peer debriefing, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, and rich, thick description.

Peer debriefing involves presenting and discussing themes with fellow researchers (Creswell, 2007). In this case, peer debriefing was carried out with the author's doctoral committee. The peer debriefing resulted in clarification of the definition and use of emotion terms in the findings. Doctoral committee members felt that use of terms such as "interest" and "amusement" needed to be distinguished from the use of such terms in everyday language.

Clarifying researcher bias involves making explicit the researcher's social position in the context of the study (Creswell, 2007), as I have done in my explanations of the study contexts. Furthermore, I clarified my biases by noting my own reactions and emotions in the context of the

study and including them in my field notes. For example, my previous participation in the SFMAC made the remarkable friendships that emerge from participation to seem commonplace. By noting this bias, I was able to attend more thoroughly to the significance of friendships. In contrast, my fear of getting lost while driving to the WBSLT colored my entry into the experience. By noting and then setting this fear aside upon arrival, I was able to observe and sense the overwhelmingly positive expressions of participants.

Member checking involves presenting themes to participants to compare initial findings with their perspectives (Henderson, 2006). According to Henderson, key informants can be especially helpful in member checking. I contacted the five key informants with draft themes in the present study and solicited their thoughts and reactions. As with peer debriefing, key informants suggested that clarification of emotion terms was necessary. Other key informants articulated exemplary incidents (Emerson et al., 1995) that further enriched the themes.

Rich, thick description signifies extensive sensory and textural details in fieldnotes (Emerson et al., 1995). Such details enable substantive themes to emerge from analysis. I attended to details as much as possible while participating. Furthermore, as previously discussed, I returned to my fieldnotes multiple times to note or elaborate on details as I recalled them. Repeated conversations with key informants also contributed additional details.

### **Protection of participants**

The present study adhered to established ethical standards for protections of research participants. This included treating participants as co-investigators rather than “subjects” and representing their interests along side the researchers’ (Henderson, 2006). Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through the university’s Office of Research Protection (IRB# 30980) ensured these standards.

## **Limitations**

Alongside the strengths of developmental psychometry and interpretive microethnography, as well as the synergy resulting from combining these approaches in a single study, I acknowledge several limitations that are important in the interpretation of study findings. First of all, the sample size of 25 participants in the psychometric portion of the study limited the statistical power of between-participant analyses, so that certain between-participant variables may have affected baselines and trajectories of positive emotions in ways that were not detected. Second, the coupled issue of response rate affected the WBSLT group, in particular. While a response rate of 25% is higher than that seen in similar studies, it is not considered optimal in current methodological writing (e.g., Schutt, 2006). A higher response rate would have increased the sample size as well the generalizability of the results to all WBSLT and SFMAC participants. Third, due to participant burden and guidelines from the management of the WBSLT experience, the number and scope of psychometric measures was limited. Multiple measures of positive emotions (e.g., PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) may have deepened understanding of positive emotions resulting from the findings. Optimally, psychometric measures of positive emotions would be validated and revised based on conversations with participants to ensure that the meanings ascribed to scale items were congruent with the researchers' expectations. Such revisions were not possible within the timeframe of the present study, however. A multi-item measure of quality of life domains (e.g., the entire WHOQOL scale; World Health Organization, 1996) may have captured a wider breadth of quality of life effects resulting from leisure travel. Fourth, due to geographical constraints, participant observation was limited to the actual leisure travel experiences, and did not extend into periods before and after leisure travel, as psychometric measurement did. Involvement with participants before and after their leisure travel experiences could have further extended and triangulated the present study's findings about development of positive emotions over time.



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## **Orientation to Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 is written as an independent manuscript that is intended for submission to the peer-reviewed tourism research journal *Annals of Tourism Research*. It is formatted according to the specifications of this journal. Chapter 2 addresses the first and second research questions of this dissertation:

1. Which positive emotions are most salient in the experience of leisure travel?
2. Which processes arising from the social context of leisure travel foster positive emotions?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Jokes Build Community: Positive Emotions in Mature Tourists**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Research on the social contexts of mature adult tourists suggests that positive emotions occur in their tourism experiences, but the processes linking tourists' social contexts and positive emotions are unknown. The study used an interpretive ethnographic approach with participant observation and conversations with key informants to document positive emotions in two mature adult tourism experiences, an educational tour of a Civil War battlefield and a model airplane contest. Interpretive thematic analysis revealed four processes linking the social contexts of these two experiences to positive emotions: amusement from humor, warmth of friendship, interest in activities, and sublime reactions to loss. These processes explain how social contexts in mature adult tourism experience produce positive emotions, and why the positive emotions that comprise amusement, warmth, interest, and sublime reactions occurred rather than others.

Keywords: aging, emotions, group travel, ethnography

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mature adult tourists are in high demand nowadays. According to Blazey (1992), mature adult tourists travel farther, stay longer, and spend more than other groups. Furthermore, the rapid aging of the Western world means that mature adults' experiences as tourists affect society at large. Consequently, understanding mature adult tourists' experiences is a pressing need (Dann, 2001). For the purposes of the present study, the term mature adults refers to individuals older than the age of 45. This inclusive definition reflects the fact that many of the benefits (Strenger, 2009) and challenges (Chiriboga, 1997) of aging begin in midlife.

Important aspects of mature adults' tourism experiences consist of positive emotions (Graburn, 2001). Positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, contentment) are transient mental states that feel subjectively pleasant and desired (Fredrickson, 1998), with some positive emotions carrying more meaning than others (Fredrickson, 2000). Researchers have neglected positive emotions in mature adult tourist experiences. This is unfortunate considering findings from psychology that suggest positive emotions abound in older age (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998), mature adults adjust their social context to prioritize emotional goals (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990), and positive emotions enable individuals to build valuable personal resources (Fredrickson, 2004). The social psychological studies cited, however, have not considered the role of tourism in mature adults' positive emotions. Also, the laboratory methods used in these studies exclude participants' interpretations of their own experiences. Without participants' interpretations, social psychologists may exclude less-theorized positive emotions, such as pride and awe. Participants' interpretations are also needed to situate processes that link social contexts to positive emotions in the real-life settings in which they occur. One of these settings may be tourism.

Ethnographies of tourists' social contexts suggest that some positive emotions occur during tourism (e.g., Foster, 1986, Sharpe, 2002). No existing study of tourists' social contexts has specifically focused on positive emotions, however. As a result, existing ethnographies fail to

explain how tourists' social contexts lead to positive emotions. Explaining how positive emotions arise from tourists' social contexts is foundational to improving mature adult tourists' experiences. Also, existing ethnographies of tourists' social contexts do not demonstrate which positive emotions are present and why these positive emotions and not others occur. Some positive emotions are more meaningful, and therefore have longer-lasting implications (Fredrickson, 2000).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to document the variety and degree of positive emotions, and to reveal the processes that connect positive emotions to social contexts, in two mature adult tourism experiences. I used an interpretive (Henderson, 2006) microethnographic (Passariello, 1983) perspective as a participant observer on two tourism experiences: a Civil War battlefield tour and a model aircraft competition. Analysis of fieldnotes from participant observation and conversations with key informants (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) resulted in four themes that demonstrate relationships between positive emotions and social contexts in mature adult tourism.

## 2. POSITIVE EMOTIONS IN MATURE ADULT TOURISTS

Three bodies of research form a conceptual foundation for the present study: tourism research of the mature adult market, social psychology of positive emotions in mature adults, and ethnographies of tourists' social contexts. Tourism research of the mature adult market has neglected mature adults tourists' experiences, including positive emotions. Social psychology studies have found that mature adults adjust their social contexts to increase positive emotions. These findings, however, have failed to consider tourist experiences, and they fail to capture participants' interpretations of their experiences. Ethnographic studies of tourists' social contexts have suggested that positive emotions are present in tourist experiences. However, a focused inquiry on positive emotions is absent from this literature, obscuring the processes that link social contexts to positive emotions as well as the depth and diversity of positive emotional experiences,

knowledge that is key to enhancing mature adult tourists' experiences. The understanding needed to create experiences rich with meaningful positive emotions for mature adults is, therefore, lacking.

What follows is a review of tourism studies of the mature adult market, the psychology of positive emotions in mature adults, and ethnographic research concerning the social contexts of tourism experiences. I will show theoretical gaps that suggest great potential for the study of processes connecting positive emotions to social contexts in the experiences of mature adult tourists.

### *2.1. Tourism research of the mature adult market*

Tourism research suggests that mature adults are an important population of tourists. Hawes (1988) and Blazey (1992) assert that mature adults travel more often, farther, stay longer, and spend more money on tourism than any other age segment of the population. Studies of the mature adult tourism market confirm mature adults' importance to the business of tourism and their heterogeneity as a group. The experiences of mature tourists, especially positive emotions, however, remain obscured. Any resulting value of tourism to the mature adults themselves, rather than to marketers or managers, is therefore not well known. Positive emotions, in particular, are thought to be a valuable aspect of the tourist experience (Graburn, 2001). With the rapid aging of the Western population, according to Dann (2001), mature adults' tourism experiences are in need of research.

Research concerning mature adults' motivations to engage in tourism suggests that they are motivated to experience culture (Szucs, Daniels, & McGuire, 2001), novelty (Sangpikul, 2008), and to spend time with family and friends (Blazey, 1992; Norman, Daniels, McGuire, & Norman, 2001). Mature adult tourists often prefer mass tourist experiences (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002; Lehto, O'Leary, & Lee, 2001). Mature adults seek value as well as quality in their tourism purchases (Lehto et al., 2001). Finally, according to Hawes (1988), mature women seek safe

environments when they travel, a preference that extends to mature male tourists (Pennington-Gray & Lane, 2001). Further inquiry into mature adults as a travel market suggests that not all mature adults travel alike. Numerous segmentation studies have clustered mature adults based on their travel motivations and behavior, subsequently differentiating the clusters on generation (Litman, 2006), gender (Lehto et al., 2001), age (Zimmer, Brayerly, & Searle, 1995), and preferred lodging (Lieux, Weaver, & McCleary, 1994). These findings are valuable from a marketing or management perspective but do little to show what mature adults experience when they travel, or how they benefit from their tourism experiences.

In a notable exception to the marketing focus of studies on mature adult tourism, Nimrod (2008) found complex relationships between retirement status and tourism behavior. However, Nimrod did not pursue the content of tourism experiences in detail, neglecting positive emotions altogether. This is unfortunate because positive emotions are increasingly important in the social psychology of aging (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998), and particular positive emotions have emerged as an important aspect of leisure for mature adults (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002, Mitas, Qian, & Yarnal, 2007).

## *2.2. The psychology of positive emotions in mature adults*

Mature adults report higher levels of positive emotions than younger adults (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998). This finding has been replicated (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008) and extended to midlife (Strenger, 2009). Positive emotions, in turn, are valuable predictors of well-being (Fredrickson, 2004; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Further investigation has produced a compelling account, the socioemotional selectivity theory (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990), to explain the increased levels of positive emotions in older age in terms of mature adults' interactions with their social contexts. Socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that, when individuals perceive their time as limitless (e.g., during early adulthood), they prioritize informational goals, thereby increasing their knowledge about the world around them. When



people perceive time as limited (e.g., in older age), they prioritize emotional goals, choosing to spend time with people they love, thereby increasing their level of positive emotions. In sum, as individuals age they increasingly create positive emotions by filling their social context with their closest friends and relatives.

Numerous experimental studies (e.g., Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990; Turk, Mather, & Carstensen, 2003) have upheld socioemotional selectivity theory. Fredrickson & Carstensen (1990) found that mature adults are more likely than young adults to prefer familiar (vs. novel) prospective social partners, a finding that has been subsequently replicated (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999). No extant studies, however, consider these processes in tourism settings. Most were conducted in academic laboratories designed to isolate participants from the outside world. Therefore, whether socioemotional selectivity theory operates during mature adult tourists' experiences is unknown. Furthermore, these studies use quantitative psychometric research paradigms that exclude participants' interpretations of their own experiences, a shortcoming of laboratory research (Henderson, 2006). As a result, the specific positive emotions arising from socioemotional selectivity are not well documented.

### *2.3. Positive emotions in ethnographies of tourists' social contexts*

A number of ethnographies describe the social contexts of tourists' experiences. Ethnographies focus on ideas and values shared by social groups such as tourists' social contexts. These works have focused on relationships between social contexts and space (Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005), liminality (Lett, 1983; Wickens, 2002), *communitas* (Sharpe, 2002), and self-improvement (Foster, 1986). Ethnographies of tourists' social contexts have uncovered peripheral evidence of positive emotions, but none have focused on positive emotions in detail. Because positive emotions emerge only amongst peripheral findings, the processes by which social contexts create positive emotions remain unknown. Also, the full breadth of positive emotions that participants experience, and why they experience those positive emotions and not others, is

unexplored. This gap is unfortunate as positive emotions are central to tourists' experiences (Graburn, 2001) and motivate the social behavior of mature adults (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990).

In a study encompassing multiple group tours, Schuchat (1981) found that participants experienced feelings of "warmth" (p. 466) in each others' company. Yarnal and Kerstetter's (2005) study of a group cruise experience revealed group norms that may contribute to positive emotions. Yarnal and Kerstetter found that participants felt "upbeat," (p. 358) and experienced the cruise as "enjoyable" and "relaxing" (p. 362). Participants who exhibited too many negative emotions were even asked to "shape up or ship out" (p. 362). Foster (1986) describes an educational cruise of famous anthropological destinations as a positive experience. Participants "relaxed" (p. 223); experienced "enjoyment" (p. 230), "pleasure," (p. 228), and felt "interest" (p. 231), especially in activities at destinations. In a third study of boating tourists, Lett (1983) does not focus on a single group, but rather on charter yacht cruisers visiting a single location (the British Virgin Islands). He found that participants "enjoyed" (p. 40) "delightful" mischief (p. 42) as well as "conviviality" (p. 44). Wickens (2002) demonstrated that vacationing on a Greek island "thrilled" (p. 838) or "relaxed" (p. 839) participants who were searching for romantic relationships. Sharpe (2005) documented "fun" (p. 264), relaxation, and "positive atmosphere" (p. 267) in a group outdoor tourism context. Sharpe's discussion of leaders establishing positive atmosphere or "tone" (267) suggests a relationship between norms and positive emotions like that found in Yarnal and Kerstetter (2005).

These ethnographies of tourists' social contexts show preliminary evidence of positive emotions. Furthermore, the works suggest that group norms, interesting activities, and the pursuit of romantic relationships could support positive emotions in tourism experiences. It is not clear, however, how group norms, interesting activities, or pursuit of romantic relationships create positive emotions or why certain positive emotions rather than others occur.

#### *2.4. Study Purpose*

Research on the mature adult tourism market has neglected mature adults' experiences during travel, including positive emotions. Social psychological studies of positive emotions in mature adults have failed to consider tourism as a setting for processes that create positive emotions, and they fail to capture participants' interpretations of their own experiences. Ethnographic studies of tourists' social contexts have suggested that positive emotions are present in their experiences. However, a focused inquiry on positive emotions is absent from this literature, obscuring the processes that link social contexts to positive emotions, as well as the diversity of positive emotional experiences. Such knowledge is foundational to improving the quality and importance of mature adult tourists' experiences (Dann, 2001; Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009). This knowledge is also important to understanding which specific positive emotions operate during leisure travel, as some positive emotions are more meaningful than others.

The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to examine the processes that link social contexts to positive emotions in mature adult tourists' experiences, and second, to explain why certain positive emotions and not others occur in these experiences. The present study uses an interpretive (Henderson, 2006) microethnographic (Passariello, 1983) framework to address the study purpose in two mature adult tourism settings, allowing participants' interpretations of their experiences to illustrate their positive emotions and social contexts.

#### *2.5. Study Methods*

In the fall of 2009, I engaged in two mature adult tourist experiences as a participant observer. I examined positive emotions and social contexts in these experiences under an interpretive microethnography perspective. In the following section, I justify the interpretive microethnography perspective, explain the sampling, describe the two experiences, and explain the data collection and analysis procedure.

The present study is a “microethnography” (after Passariello, 1983, p. 109). A microethnography uses an ethnographic approach over a shorter time scale than a traditional ethnography (Creswell, 2007). Microethnographic studies have contributed to tourism theory in a weekend-long study of domestic Mexican beach tourism (Passariello, 1983), a nine-day recreational cruise (Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005), and a 23-day educational cruise (Foster, 1986).

An ethnographic perspective focuses on ideas and values that participants consider important (Creswell, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Through researcher “immersion” as a participant observer (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 2), including personal engagement in activities alongside participants and note-taking, and through conversations with key informants, individuals with profound knowledge about participants’ experiences (Emerson, et al., 1995), the ethnographic approach reveals connections between participants’ experiences and “pervasive patterns” in their social contexts (Creswell, 2007, p.71). The present study focuses on patterns of processes that generate experiences of positive emotions.

*2.5.1. Sample.* The sample consisted of two mature adult tourist experiences. The War Between the States Learning Tour (WBSLT; a pseudonym) consisted of a three and one half day educational group tour of a Civil War battlefield in suburban northern Virginia, U.S.A, with 80 participants. The Sandhills Freeflight Model Airplane Contest (SFMAC; a pseudonym) consisted of a one-day participant-organized contest for free flight model airplanes at a grass-farming field in rural North Carolina, U.S.A, with 23 participants.

I selected the two experiences based on important theoretical and logistical criteria: they involved an overnight stay away from home, and could therefore be classified as tourism (World Tourism Organization, 1994), were well-attended by mature adult participants, and their dates were fixed far enough ahead of time to permit data collection. The sample is an availability or convenience sample (Trochim, 2007), paralleling other interpretive microethnographies of tourists’ social contexts (Foster, 1986; Passariello, 1983; Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005).

To obtain additional information, I interacted with two to three key informants from each group. I selected key informants based on availability and perennial involvement with the studied experiences (Henderson, 2006). For the WBSLT, key informants were the director and the head instructor of the tour. I began corresponding with the director of the tour several months before the experience to gain access to the group (Emerson et al., 1995) as well as trust (Henderson, 2006). Based on my history of participation with the SFMAC, I selected three individuals who reflected extensive knowledge of the experience.

*2.5.2. War Between the States Learning Tour.* The WBSLT originated through the Alumni Association travel agency at a large Eastern U.S. University. It consists of an annual, well-orchestrated faculty-guided visit to a Civil War battlefield. A different battlefield is visited every year. The best sites are repeated frequently.

The tour takes place over four days, including a half-day allotted to travel to the destination and a half-day back, and over-nighting in a common hotel. On the afternoon of the inaugural day, the program and the battle are introduced at the hotel in a lecture format, followed by participant introductions, dinner, and another lecture. The second and third days comprise hiking the battlefield sites while listening to instructors lecture, with bus rides connecting hotel, battlefield, and meal sites. The final morning the tour involves discussion with instructors at the hotel.

A Program Planner for the Alumni Association has directed the WBSLT for 17 years. The director's role is logistical, including selecting and booking the hotel, accounting, and introducing participants to each other and to the instructors. The head instructor of the WBSLT has been lecturing on the tour since its inception.

*2.5.3. Sandhills Freeflight Model Airplane Contest.* The SFMAC is a one-day contest for flying model airplanes that has taken place twice a year for four years. Most participants arrive the night before the contest and stay in a hotel. From the beginning of the contest at 9 a.m. until its end at 4:30 p.m., participants alternate between preparing their airplane models individually or

in pairs and flying and retrieving the models. These actions are frequently interrupted to make conversation with fellow participants.

SFMAC is a model airplane contest that features “free flight,” meaning model airplanes are “free” to fly wherever aerodynamic forces and the wind take them. Models are built from balsa wood and covered in tissue paper, and powered either by hand (thrown) or by tightly wound rubber bands that turn their propellers. The object is to get the longest possible flight. Participants are required to build their own models.

The SFMAC takes place in rural southern North Carolina on a residential grass farm, a highly desirable site for model aviation. Participants park along a dirt path in the field, forming a line of 10-20 vehicles. Participants set folding chairs and canopies behind their vehicles. The contest directors also set up a large table behind their vehicle where participants record flight times. Two informal regional clubs administer the competition according to rules created by larger national organizations. Unlike the WBSLT, however, the SFMAC experience is not orchestrated in detail, and the flow of activities shifts according to the weather and participants’ preferences.

*2.5.4. Data collection.* Data collection commenced several months before the studied experiences with initial contacts with key informants, continuing through the experiences and concluding with debriefing conversations with key informants (Emerson et al., 1995). I took fieldnotes before, during, and after each experience, noting evidence of participants’ as well as my own behavior and emotions. I followed three suggestions of Emerson et al. (1995) in taking fieldnotes: I took notes in view of participants, I balanced note-taking and participation, and I expanded upon notes taken during the day each evening. At both experiences participants were aware of my role as a researcher. I therefore took my notes when and where it was the most practical, sometimes in full view of participants. A more challenging decision involved balancing note-taking and participation. Like Charmaz (2006), I too had believed that I would be able to “slip back” into a private space and take notes throughout the day (p. 22). However, downtime at both experiences was fragmented. At the WBSLT, the most frequent opportunities to write

occurred after boarding the bus ahead of other participants. At the SFMAC, opportunities to retreat into my vehicle and write arose when weather was poor or competitive action was slow. At the end of each day of participant observation, I used a free hour to write down any additional experiences from the day.

Besides attending both experiences as a participant observer, I also made use of informal conversations with key informants (Emerson et al., 1995; Henderson, 2006) before and after both experiences. I made decisions about when and how to contact key informants based on their available time, an important consideration with key informants (Henderson, 2006). In the case of the WBSLT, I spoke with the tour director on three occasions before the experience, and twice afterwards. Additionally, we exchanged numerous e-mails. I also spoke with the head instructor of the tour after the experience. In the case of the SFMAC, I spoke on the phone monthly and at length with three longtime participants starting three months before the experience. I also spoke on the phone with each of these key informants twice in the month following the SFMAC.

In my position as a white male 26-year-old graduate student, I was different from the WBSLT group. Participants were aware of my research and often used my study as an initial subject of conversation. My position in SFMAC was more familiar to participants. I had attended many previous SFMAC contests. Therefore, I was seen as more participant than observer at the SFMAC.

I moved into analysis with 10,210 words of fieldnotes from participant observation and conversation with key informants.

*2.5.5. Data analysis.* I used an interpretive (Henderson, 2006) thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) framework to analyze the data, using Charmaz (2006) as well as Emerson et al. (1995) as references for interpretive analyses of ethnographic data. Interpretive thematic analysis was chosen because the processes that link social contexts to positive emotions in mature adult tourists' experience are not understood. Such uncharted territory renders an inductive process such as interpretive thematic analysis appropriate (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Henderson, 2006).

Analysis proceeded in three phases: open coding, focused coding, and theoretical synthesis (Charmaz, 2006).

The first phase of analysis, open coding, involved a sentence-by-sentence naming of analytic content in the data. Charmaz (2006) urges this phase of coding to focus on the actions of participants (e.g., laughing, gesticulating), so that the eventual result of the analysis is oriented toward explaining what participants do. I carried out open coding using commenting and highlighting functions in a word processing program.

The second phase of analysis, focused coding, involved searching for patterns among open codes to merge, divide, and elaborate them for analytic content. In this phase, the most frequent and analytically significant open codes are merged and refined to form rich, complex themes. During this iterative process, I created, eliminated, merged, and elaborated themes with exemplary incidents from my notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). For example, after creating a theme around the feeling of interest in learning about history at the WBSLT, I found that analogous feelings of interest also occurred in instances of SFMAC participants becoming absorbed in competition. Therefore, the competitive striving found in the SFMAC was folded into a more general theme of interest in activity.

The final phase of analysis, theoretical synthesis, involved connecting the themes based on evidence in the data. The outcome of this phase was a visual model according to the example of Yarnal and Kerstetter (2005) that portrayed themes and relationships in a flowchart format.

*2.5.6. Validation.* In validating my findings, I used four of eight validation procedures recommended by Creswell (2007): peer debriefing, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, and rich, thick description.

Peer debriefing (Creswell, 2007) consisted of presenting the themes to the lead author's doctoral committee members, all of whom have substantial experience in the subject area of the present study. This debriefing revealed that some clarification was required in the themes, especially in the definitions of emotion terms such as "amusement" and "sublime."



I clarified my own biases throughout the study by commencing note taking months before the leisure travel experiences, noting my reactions to circumstances surrounding my research. These notes revealed instances where my biases may have changed my interpretations of participant behavior. For example, my previous involvement with the SFMAC initially caused me to overlook the importance of new friendships to the experience. By examining my position as a repeat participant in the SFMAC, I was able to refocus my attention on the importance participants ascribed to new friendships.

According to the suggestion of Henderson (2006), I relied on my key informants for member checks. I sent each of the five key informants an email message with a brief summary of my themes soliciting their feedback. In the case of the SFMAC, both key informants agreed with my findings, suggesting additional exemplary incidents (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). In the case of the WBSLT, both key informants also agreed with my findings, but as with peer debriefing, recommended clarification of emotion terms.

The use of rich, thick description refers to the inclusion of extensive sensory and textural details in fieldnotes (Emerson et al., 1995), enabling substantive themes to emerge from analysis. To ensure that my notes contained sufficient detail, I returned to them several times after initially noting experiences to add details I could clearly recall. At times I followed up with key informants to add further details to notes describing exemplary incidents (Emerson et al., 1995).

#### *2.6. Four processes create positive emotions*

Analysis of ethnographic fieldnote data uncovered four processes that linked social contexts to positive emotions in two mature adult tourist experiences: amusement from humor, warmth from friendship, interest in activities, and sublime reactions to loss. Despite differences between the two experiences studied, a form of each of these processes was present in both experiences. In the following section I define and illustrate these four processes.

*2.6.1. Amusement from humor.* Humor was a common antecedent to the positive emotion of amusement in each of the experiences. Amusement is used here in the emotional sense, the feeling of finding something funny, not the contextual sense of an entertaining activity. Humor created amusement in two ways: participants in both experiences used jokes to make conversations amusing, and the formal norm of humor in the WBSLT punctuated the experience with humorous episodes.

Both the WBSLT and the SFMAC experiences contained persistent joking in participants' conversations. Laughter and exuberant gestures in reaction to these jokes were taken as markers of the positive emotion, amusement. While jokes occurred in conversations throughout the WBSLT, the inaugural evening contained a particularly concentrated episode of joking. The director of the tour asked participants to introduce themselves and state why they were on the tour. A few participants gave serious reasons for being on the tour, such as "to learn more about this under-appreciated battle" or "to see the same wonderful people again." However, a majority took the opportunity to joke. As their reasons for joining the tour, participants offered political jokes: "I was on my way to D.C. to protest health care reform, got lost, and somehow ended up here," family jokes: "My wife roped me into this again," "To get away from my in-laws," and mental illness jokes: "Because the place I live forgot to lock my doors again," "I'm off my medication." These jokes transformed the task of introductions into a highly amusing segment of the experience.

On the following day, one of our tour buses got stuck on a rural road, prompting much joking among participants. One participant playfully remarked that a stuck bus is "fun for about the first two hours," but the situation was resolved within an hour. This hour of making fun of the stuck bus contained the highest level of positive emotion (the loudest laughter, the most relaxed postures, and the most exuberant gestures) I observed over the entire tour.

At the SFMAC, many conversations pivoted around jokes or humorous episodes. For example, while I ate lunch, my 66-year-old female key informant sat in the adjacent truck and

wisecracked at her husband's expense about his slow adoption of new technology. Later, she became the subject of humor as several participants pointed out a spider crawling on her shirt. They tried to help her brush off the spider, but one had to admit, "The spider is on you...someplace I can't touch." This joke prompted much laughter and positioned all present as friends, standing close together and feeding off each others' amusement.

I bonded with another SFMAC participant over jokes about male baldness. I brazenly commented on another participant's baldness to him. He responded by taking off his hat, showing his own completely bald head. Then, he playfully suggested that I should refer to such people with the more politically correct term "follically challenged." Laughing together gave me the sense that we could venture into sensitive topics with positive emotional results.

The director and head instructor on the WBSLT together implement a formal norm of humor in the group. Participants perpetuate this norm and frequently mentioned the group's laughter, humor, and positive attitude to me. This norm assures recurrent episodes of amusement throughout the experience. The instructors incorporated humor into their lectures. They used jokes to punctuate the information, offering a breather from the barrage of in-depth facts, names, and numbers. Participants reacted viscerally to this information-humor rhythm, relaxing their poses and turning their gazes to each other with every joke, then once again leaning forward and looking at the instructor as the flow of information resumed. I interpreted these behaviors as signs of the positive emotion, amusement.

After the WBSLT, both head instructor and director emphasized the role of a formal norm of humor in creating positive emotions. The director and the head instructor both told me that their 17-year working relationship allows them to "play off each other" with teasing in the presence of participants. According to the head instructor, the teasing goes a long way to creating amusement. The director said that this positive emotion "adds to the value" of the WBSLT experience by fostering relationships and a sense of group identity among regulars. She concluded: "jokes build community."

2.6.2. *Warmth from friendship.* “Regular” participants with a history of participation in each experience felt the positive emotions of joy, contentment, and gratitude in the context of refreshing their friendships. These emotions are subsumed under the term *warmth*. Fredrickson (1998) calls positive emotions felt toward another person love. In the present study, the term *warmth* more accurately represents participants’ perspectives, as they would use love to refer exclusively to romantic and familial relationships. Therefore, I use *warmth* to describe the positive emotions they felt toward each other.

The WBSLT and SFMAC experiences both featured groups of regulars with a multi-year history of repeat participation. Regulars saw each experience as a reunion with friends, filled with the positive emotions of joy, contentment, and gratitude.

Throughout the WBSLT experience, participants told me that there were “few” or “no” cliques and that regulars comprised “the finest of groups.” I observed participants engage in friendly chatter, catching up on personal lives, and in some cases, sharing issues ranging from heart disease to traumatic stress from war. I interpreted these behaviors as expressions of emotions including joy and contentment toward each other. When the program ended three days later, the banter and discussion between participants melted into hugs, handshakes, and smiles - expressions of the joy participants felt from having spent their annual WBSLT together.

My seat-mate on the first day of the WBSLT reported feeling a wide breadth of positive emotions toward regulars. Every year, he said, he feels some regret at not keeping in touch with participants after the WBSLT. When he arrives and sees them again, he feels the “happiness” as seen in the hugs and smiles described above. He said it was like “a high school reunion.” He also reported feeling calm and comfort from “familiar faces.”

The behaviors of regular SFMAC participants were also reminiscent of a reunion. Upon arriving, participants walked the line of cars parked on the contest field, shaking hands and exchanging loud, excited, joyful greetings with their fellow modelers, including newcomers, one

by one. The greeting coalesced around the registration table, where participants signed in and paid the entrance fee, then lingered to enjoy extended conversation.

SFMAC participants impressed on me the importance of friendships with regulars. One participant listed “long-term friends and short-term friends” as valuable outcomes of SFMAC participation. My 47-year-old male key informant told me that “friends are the most important reason I go” to the SFMAC. He also stated that spending time flying gliders in the late afternoon with a friend “made the contest” for him. In debriefing, he described his feelings toward friendships established and renewed at the contest as “deep gratitude.”

*2.6.3. Interest in activities.* The WBSLT as well as SFMAC featured frequent displays of the positive emotion of interest. In the present study, the term interest refers to the feeling of being excited by, curious about, or open to something (Fredrickson, 1998). I observed two different processes leading from the central activities of the WBSLT and SFMAC, respectively, to feelings of interest. On the WBSLT, the process of absorbing historical information inspired interest. WBSLT participants expressed interest by listening intently to instructors’ lectures, asking questions, and engaging interpretive materials. At times, they overcame significant physical challenges to indulge their interest. At the SFMAC, on the other hand, striving for goals—long flights and victories—prompted interest.

The central activity of the WBSLT, absorbing information about Civil War history, prompted participants to feel the positive emotion of interest. The most frequent opportunity to absorb historical information occurred at instructors’ lectures in the hotel (on the inaugural day) and on the battlefield (on the two full days following). While participants listened to lectures, I observed evidence of interest, including behaviors such as leaning forward, looking at the speaker, sporting serious facial expressions, and nodding at emphasized points in the lecture. At the end of each lecture, participants asked questions, further conveying their interest.

Besides listening to lectures, participants showed interest in interpretive displays and materials in the battlefield area, culminating in a visitor center where the second full day of the

WBSLT ended. Participants expressed their interest by photographing sites, memorial markers, gravestones, and even photos and printouts in the head instructor's notebook. They also discussed these interpretive materials intently with their fellow travelers, pointing out details and sometimes asking questions about them of the nearest instructor.

WBSLT participants' interest overcame substantial physical demands. The two full days of the tour involved rigorous hiking. I noted some negative reactions, such as complaining and fearful facial expressions, when our bus arrived at sites that appeared physically challenging, such as large hills or dense woods. Almost all participants, however, hiked these sites without becoming disinterested in subsequent lectures, discussions, or displays. By the end of each day, participants were visibly fatigued, with tired facial expressions and postures. However, they excitedly discussed content with instructors and with each other, distracting from their exhaustion. In debriefing, the head instructor confirmed to me that participants "are always tired, but morale never flags."

At the SFMAC, striving for long flights from one's model airplanes inspired interest. In contrast to WBSLT participants' interest in the process of learning, at the SFMAC, striving toward an outcome (long flights) fueled interest. I observed evidence of interest in participants' hurrying to repair models for competition, concentrated facial expressions when winding rubber-powered models or launching gliders, and attention to flight duration facilitated by stopwatches, sunglasses, and binoculars. Further examples of interest included preparation for the contest, participants' descriptions of the contest experience, and attention to technical ideas.

One participant expressed interest in achievement by preparing the evening before the experience. Instead of socializing with other participants, he explained that he stayed in his hotel room and worked on a model airplane. He reported feeling positively driven to finish this model in time for the contest.

Participants also expressed their interest in achieving long flights in their descriptions of the experience. One participant likened the pursuit of good flights to the "creative part" of his

former job as an engineer. Another participant noted that feeling interested set the SFMAC apart from the repetitive routine of retired life. A third participant reported having a “great” day because of the three events he had won. He recited his victories in detail, but said, “I have to fly three more events before timed flying ends at 4:30...I have to get my mind into it.” He made this statement looking intently at half-open boxes of his models waiting to be flown.

Another expression of interest at SFMAC consisted of highly encouraged use of other participants’ superior technical ideas. Participants often stopped each other to compare models and discuss innovations. When I looked at his airplanes, my 47-year-old key informant joked that he could “see my brain working.” I noticed many other participants similarly examine each others’ models, expressing interest by pointing to various features and asking questions.

*2.6.4. Sublime reactions to loss.* The WBSLT as well as SFMAC featured stories of loss that prompted sublime emotional reactions among participants. I use the term sublime according to the rich, broad definition in Webster’s 1934 dictionary (“a sense of elevated beauty, nobility, grandeur, solemnity,” Neilson & Knott, 1934, p. 1142) to capture the complexity of a profound, meaningful emotional experience that contains primarily positive but also some negative emotions. For each experience studied, the stories of loss were different, and sublime reactions arose in distinct processes. In addition to the positive emotion of awe, sublime reactions also included compassion as well as anger, especially on the WBSLT, and joy as well as sadness, especially on the SFMAC.

Engaging stories of past loss of life in the Civil War produced a sublime mixture of awe and compassion, which are positive emotions, and anger, a negative emotion, in WBSLT participants. At each stop on hikes through the battlefield, instructors factually related statistics of how many soldiers had fallen in that particular place. These statistics regularly contributed a sense of seriousness to the flow of information. Instead of using statistics, however, the head instructor illustrated the losses of war using personal stories from soldiers’ accounts. These stories included colonels predicting their deaths in letters home; soldiers asking their wives to buy

widow's insurance policies; and statesman Daniel Webster losing his son, a Union colonel, on the battle's third day. The head instructor later told me that she intended these personal stories, which illustrated the "ripple effect" of a battle on distant places and people, to engage female participants in particular, stating, "with these stories of the home front, I get the women."

In reaction to these stories, participants gasped, moaned, and shook their heads. Based on these signals and facial expressions, I interpreted participants as feeling compassion, especially for the fear of the soldiers and the sadness of comrades and families. I followed up with several participants as well as the head instructor to determine their interpretations of these reactions. Some confirmed the emotion of compassion. The head instructor told me that a majority of participants have a military background, and their compassion often stemmed from their own experiences as war veterans. Additionally, participants talked about feelings of awe. They explained that to see one's comrades falling and nevertheless advance into battle required unfathomable courage, and through hearing the stories of loss, they felt profound awe at this courage.

One participant told me that, despite the awe he too felt, he wished that the statistics on loss were not part of the program. It made him angry to hear of large numbers of "young men dying, basically, because of poor generalship." Other participants, however, savored the feelings of awe and compassion and, at times, even asked to hear more loss statistics.

The key story of loss at the SFMAC involved the loss of a participant's model airplane. Observing this loss unfold produced a sublime combination of awe and joy, which are positive emotions, and sadness, a negative emotion, in participants. At free flight model airplane contests, localized conditions of rising warm air periodically carry away a model in flight. A beautiful, valuable model is lost, but the flight that costs a modeler his airplane can hand him victory. At most contests, there are several such "flyaways." While this is not a loss of life as at the WBSLT, it is more tangible and immediate.



A single such flyaway occurred at this year's SFMAC. As the model airplane disappeared, I observed reactions indicating awe, including stares, pointing at the airplane, and exclamations such as, "Wow!" from participants. At the time, I was sitting next to my 66-year-old female key informant. She kept exclaiming how high the airplane was and that it was still climbing, suggesting that the sight awed her.

At the time of the study, the participant whose model was lost was experiencing a challenging life transition; a move from his large "dream" home to assisted living. In debriefing, my 66-year-old female key informant reported that watching his spectacular flight was an experience of mixed emotions including joy and sadness. She called it "a tremendous flight" and said she was "really happy for him to be getting such a nice flight." Her voice then took on a sad tone, however. She said repeatedly that he in particular "needed to not lose that airplane." With his current life situation, he "could not physically build another." She concluded that she loves to see people get a good flight, but not "too good," and unfortunately this flight had been "too good."

## *2.7. Discussion*

The present study investigated processes that link positive emotions to social contexts in two mature adult tourism experiences. Findings revealed four processes: amusement from humor, warmth from friendship, interest in activities, and sublime reactions to loss. Each of these processes extends existing literature on mature adult tourism, the psychology of emotions in older age, and ethnography of tourists' social contexts.

The presence of humor has been documented in other ethnographies of tourism experiences (e.g., Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005). The present study extends the findings of humor by revealing humor's use as a constructive social force in mature adult tourism. Jokes create humor in conversations, leading to laughter and physical proximity, signs of the positive emotion of amusement. The constructive, relationship-reinforcing process leading from humor to amusement

supports socioemotional selectivity theory (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990), which asserts that mature adults orient their social context to produce positive emotions. In both experiences, participants used humor to obtain the positive emotion of amusement from interactions with their fellow tourists. While amusement is often listed as a positive emotion, its outcomes are more widely understood in terms of evolutionary biology (Gervais & Wilson, 2005) rather than in terms of tourism or social psychology theory.

Neither experience featured humor that had no apparent purpose, as seen in Lett (1983). The incident of the stuck bus on the WBSLT is an example of humor used to relieve negative emotion, as seen in Sharpe (2002) and Pearce (2009). These works portray humor as neutralizing negative emotions. In these studies, humor is a diffuser of tension (Sharpe, 2002) or fear (Pearce, 2009), much as participants' joking on the WBSLT diffused any uncertainty or disappointment caused by the stuck bus.

According to the director of the tour as well as my observations, however, interrupting negativity with humor is secondary to the use of humor as a "social lubricant" (director's words) that brought participants together. The primary process emerging from humorous episodes served a constructive, affiliative purpose. In the case of the WBSLT, tour leaders' conscious, intentional use of humor furthered this affiliative purpose. This finding echoes tour leaders' role in creating positive emotions using group norms, as seen in Yarnal and Kerstetter (2005), without the threats of punishment that Yarnal and Kerstetter noted. The joking observed on the SFMAC was not fostered by leaders, but emerged organically from participant interactions. Nevertheless, the relationship-building outcomes of humor were similar. Furthermore, I did not observe sarcastic, cruel, or otherwise negative uses of humor at either experience.

Participants in both experiences displayed positive emotions toward others in the context of building or rekindling friendly relationships. These emotions included joy and contentment, which are subsumed under the term warmth. Emotions of warmth in the context of a community of regulars are consistent with socioemotional selectivity theory (Fredrickson & Carstensen,

1990). As the theory predicts, participants invested time and energy into existing close friendships with regulars to maximize positive emotions. The positive emotional outcomes of these friendships included feelings of joy and contentment. These findings demonstrate that long-lasting group tour communities with meaningful friendships, such as those seen in Yarnal and Kerstetter (2005), engender positive emotions. The depth and closeness of relationships in the WBSLT and SFMAC groups contrasts sharply with Foster's (1986) finding of only "superficial" interactions on an educational group cruise (p. 229) and Lett's description of the charter yacht touring community as "first names only" (p. 48). These experiences do not feature groups of regulars that return and reunite annually, a possible reason for the superficiality of the relationships between co-travelers.

Some presentations of socioemotional selectivity theory (e.g., Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990, Carstensen et al., 1999) specify that mature adults invest in their closest relationships (family, existing friendships) over and above newer or more distant relationships. The present findings challenge this assertion in two ways. First, regulars on both experiences do not necessarily keep in touch once the trip ends. Nevertheless, participants continue to invest and derive feelings of warmth from the community of regulars on each experience. Second, participants in both of the studied groups readily formed friendships with newcomers as well. Therefore, for some mature adults, socioemotional selectivity means selecting a variety of relationships, including new and distant friends, into their lives, not selecting such relationships out of their lives in favor of family and intimate friendly relationships. Existing studies of socioemotional selectivity theory may have missed these processes because they often focus on joy as a proxy for all positive emotions (e.g., Carstensen et al., 1999), and do not solicit participants' interpretations of their own experiences, potentially excluding less well known positive emotions such as awe and compassion.

The studied experiences centered around specific activities, prompting interest, paralleling a process discussed by Foster (1986). However, Foster framed interest in his study as

motivated by participants' need to show competence for the sake of social status. I did not find such a motivation among my participants. Participants in the WBSLT as well as SFMAC appeared to feel a genuine draw to engage in activities that sparked their interest, even calling themselves by epithets such as “nerds,” “dorks,” or “freaks” that could have been insults in another context. In the social contexts of the WBSLT and SFMAC, these epithets were proud signs of participants' identification with activities: they might be a “Civil War freak” or “a model airplane nut.”

The depth of interest found in the present study as well as in Foster (1986) contrasts with experiences not focused on particular activities (e.g., Lett, 1983; Wickens, 2002). Experiences described by Lett (1983) and Wickens (2002) are oriented to generalized relaxation and enjoyment in a particular setting (charter yacht in the Virgin Islands; Greek island). As such, participants in such experiences spontaneously choose from a variety of activities throughout the experience (Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005). Lett (1983) and Wickens (2002) assert that this freedom is central to the appeal of the experience. They do not, however, report expressions of interest among participants. Therefore, structuring a mature adult tourism experience around a focused set of activities, such as the study of American Civil War history or free flight model aviation, appears requisite to fostering the positive emotion of interest throughout their trip.

Existing ethnographies of social contexts in tourist experiences have hinted at positive as well as negative emotions, but they contain no mention of awe or compassion, emotions present in sublime reactions in the present study. Ethnographies of social contexts in tourism such as Foster (1986), Passariello (1983), and Wickens (2002) most frequently mention positive emotions such as amusement and relaxation. These emotions are positive and constructive (Fredrickson, 1998), but do not necessarily carry great personal meaning, an aspect of positive emotions that allegedly makes them more memorable and potent (Fredrickson, 2000). The sublime emotions documented in the present study resulted from stories of loss with personal significance for participants. Therefore, these sublime emotions contributed a weighty seriousness (“solemnity,”

Neilson & Knott, 1934, p. 1138) to the experiences that other positive emotions do not necessarily contribute, making these experiences personally and memorably meaningful to participants.

The positive emotions implicated in participants' sublime reactions, awe and compassion, are also absent from social psychological studies of positive emotions in mature adults (e.g., Carstensen et al., 1999; Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990). As a result of using quantitative psychometric paradigms, these studies have prevented participants from expressing emotions such as awe and compassion. The present study found that these emotions are present in some mature adult tourists' experiences.

The solemnity of sublime reactions is, however, present in a study of historical heritage co-construction and consumption at the Civil War battlefield of Gettysburg (Chronis, 2002). Because Chronis focused on the interpretation carried out by battlefield guides more than visitors' experiences, his study missed the emotional complexity and social process behind their reactions. The findings of the present study suggest that, when confronted with stories of loss, mature adult tourists integrate it with other information presented, as well as with their own past experiences, producing complex emotional reactions that include awe, compassion, sadness, and anger.

I found evidence in the data of connections between the four processes that linked social contexts to positive emotions (amusement from humor, warmth from friendship, interest in activities and newcomers, and sublime reactions to loss). Humor contributed to friendship. Many conversations between participants were anchored in jokes, and participants moved physically and emotionally closer as they laughed and shared humorous anecdotes or observations. According to the WBSLT director, the constant "playing off" between her and the head instructor has created a sense of community among participants.

Interest in activities also contributed to warmth from friendship, as participants engaged their fascination with the Civil War or model aviation in an interactive social context. From

asking each other questions about the battle (WBSLT) to holding each other's airplanes for winding (SFMAC), participants bonded over their shared feelings of interest.

The connections between these first three themes and participants' sublime reactions to loss were somewhat less obvious. At the WBSLT, several participants coupled the positive emotions of "awe and excitement" to capture the feeling of reconnecting with the past. This connection engendered "excitement" and interest when information such as unfolding events of a battle were discussed. When the lecture homed in on stories of loss, such excitement turned to sublime emotions, including awe. Sublime reactions to loss gave the content meaning and solemnity that it would not have had otherwise.

At the SFMAC, the possibility of losing an airplane model was the price to pay for a flight that was "too good." This experience connected interest to sublime reactions. While interest was implicated in striving for long flights, a flight that was too long resulted in losing the model airplane, creating sublime reactions that included awe and sadness.

Obtained with an ethnographic focus on positive emotions and social context, the present findings show which positive emotions are present and how they arise in mature adult tourists' experiences. In his description of the vacation as a secular ritual, Graburn (2001) makes a compelling case for the importance of positive emotions in tourism experiences. The findings of the present study confirm this assertion, indicating that the experiences studied produced persistent patterns of amusement, warmth, interest, awe, and other positive emotions to a lesser degree, because of interpersonal interactions, norms, practices, activities, and circumstances in mature adult tourists' social contexts. Finding these emotions confirms and extends the palette of positive emotions suggested by previous tourism ethnographies (e.g., Foster, 1986, Lett, 1983). Furthermore, the findings indicate that processes rooted in humor, friendship, engagement in activities, and dealing with loss fostered positive emotions. These processes were until now absent from research of mature adult tourists, positive emotions in mature adults, and tourists' social contexts.

### 3. CONCLUSION

#### *3.1. Processes linking positive emotions to social contexts extend theory*

The findings extend existing research literature in five ways. First, they demonstrate that humor can be used to create positive emotions, not just to relieve negative ones. Ethnographies of tourists' social contexts (Sharpe, 2002) and a study of humor in tourism (Pearce, 2009) portrayed humor as a way to smooth over potentially negative situations, while Lett (1983) documents humor as altogether aimless. The present study found that humor fosters positive emotions, and eventually, relationships, bringing our understanding of humor in tourists' social contexts into a more constructive light.

Second, the findings show how group norms of humor can create positive emotions. Previous ethnographies of tourists' social contexts suggested that norms played important roles in preventing negativity in a tour group (e.g., Sharpe, 2002; Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005). The present study extends this finding by showing that humor, especially between group leaders, is a constructive mechanism to foster norms of positivity.

Third, the findings show that mature adults use friendships in their social context to engender positive emotions, but in a more inclusive way than socioemotional selectivity theory predicts. Socioemotional selectivity theory (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990) suggests that mature adults limit their social context to their closest kin and friends as they age. The present study, however, found participants enjoying close friendships and new friendships with equal vigor.

Fourth, the findings demonstrate that specific activities inspire interest in participants. This interest was not present in ethnographies of less-activity focused tourist social contexts (e.g., Lett, 1983; Wickens, 2002; Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005) and was judged to be motivated by social appearances of competence in Foster (1986). The present study, instead, suggests that tourist experiences focused on particular activities foster genuine, constructive interest.

Finally, sublime reactions to loss added a meaningful, solemn experience of positive emotions that has not been documented in other ethnographies of social contexts in tourism. An existing study of a Civil War battlefield also found sublime reactions among tourists (Chronis, 2002) but did not specify the emotions that comprised sublime reactions, or how stories of loss inspired such reactions. The present study found that participants experience meaning in stories of loss, and that the resulting emotions include awe, compassion, anger, and sadness.

As a whole, these contributions to existing knowledge of mature adult tourism have exciting implications for the administration of tourism experiences. They also raise intriguing new questions about the traveling experiences of mature adults.

### *3.2. Implications for practice*

The present study suggests that particular processes link positive emotions to social contexts of mature adult tourism. Providers of tourist experiences may take note of these processes to increase their value to mature adults. The findings suggest four implications for practice. First, whether humor is established by tour leaders, as on the War Between the States Learning Tour, or emerges from participant relationships, as on the Sandhills Freeflight Model Airplane Contest, keeping laughter going in a traveling group creates positive emotions, building community. Second, establishing a “core” group of “regular” repeat customers can produce a sense of “reunion,” rich with positive emotions, with each tourist experience. Third, experiences designed around a central activity, be it educational or competitive, are likely to inspire interest. Finally, creating a sense of gravity or respect around stories of loss may create opportunities for meaningful experiences of sublime emotions.

### *3.3. Future directions*

The present study examined two mature adult tourism experiences. The value of the findings suggests promise for extending this work to other types of experiences as well as other



populations. The findings also suggest that future research could situate positive emotions in the emerging literature on tourism and health.

Many mature adult tourism experiences exist, some centered around particular activities (e.g., the two experiences studied), while others are geared more broadly (e.g., relaxation, sightseeing). These varieties of travel experiences are likely to produce different emotional profiles. Also, there is increasing interest in mature adults' physical activity (e.g., Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002), and physically focused mature adult tourist experiences, such as alpine hiking vacations (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004) appear beneficial. The processes that create positive emotions during these experiences merit investigation. These processes could also differ during trips of longer duration (Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, & Vingerhoets, 2010) and those involving other modes of transportation (e.g., air, rail, H. Mensink, personal communication, 12 November 2009). It is interesting that, despite different leadership structures, similar processes arose from the social contexts of both experiences. Nevertheless, the impacts of tour leadership on social contexts and positive emotions likewise merit further study.

In 2009, Sonmez and Apostolopoulos presented an agenda for research of health outcomes from tourism. They emphasized inquiry into the mechanisms by which tourism experiences can contribute to health in all aspects of life (e.g., physical, mental, social). The present study suggests that positive emotions may be an important beneficial aspect of tourist experiences. With additional studies, such findings could reframe tourism as an important component in quality of life, making the "need" to "get away" an expression of one's well-being (Nawijn et al., 2010).

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### Orientation to Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is written as an independent manuscript that is intended for submission to the peer-reviewed leisure research journal *Leisure Sciences*. It is formatted according to the specifications of this journal. Chapter 3 addresses the third research question of this dissertation:

3. Is the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel consistent with the *peak model*, with positive emotions increasing before leisure travel, remaining elevated during the experience, and declining after?

### Chapter 3

## **Taking a “Peak” at Leisure Travelers’ Positive Emotions**

### ABSTRACT

Recent studies in social psychology show that positive emotions are an important antecedent to valuable life outcomes. The purpose of this study was to determine how positive emotions develop from day to day before, during, and after a leisure travel experience. The study measured positive emotions on a daily basis in 25 mature adult participants before, during, and after two brief leisure travel experiences. Consistent with the “peak” model established by previous research, positive emotions overall and the specific emotions of joy and interest increased before leisure travel, were elevated during travel, and declined afterward ( $p < 0.05$ ). Implications for practice include managing for positive emotions before and after leisure travel as well as during. Future research should consider positive emotions in other populations and other leisure travel experiences.

## TAKING A “PEAK” AT LEISURE TRAVELERS’ POSITIVE EMOTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Leisure travel is supposed to be filled with positive emotions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that people fully expect to “have a great time” when they go on a trip for leisure. Indeed, the role of vacation marketers has often been characterized as the selling of positive emotions (Yuksel & Akgul, 2006). Numerous studies have empirically supported the link between leisure travel and positive emotions (e.g., Nawijn, 2009; Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, & Vingerhoets, 2010), including studies specific to nature-based leisure travel (e.g., Hammit, 1980; More & Payne, 1978) as well as health and wellness travel (e.g., Strauss-Blasche, Muhry, Lehofer, Moser, & Marktl, 2004a; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004b).

Positive emotions facilitate positive processes that build enduring quality of life over time (Fredrickson, 1998). Numerous studies have implicated positive emotions in long-lasting social success (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) and resilience (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009). Positive emotions are, therefore, a topic of great interest to contemporary social psychology. Vigorous research programs that seek to boost positive emotions have led to highly successful books for the general public (e.g., Fredrickson, 2009; Lyubomirsky, 2008). Surprisingly, this literature has almost nothing to say about leisure travel, a serious omission considering the promise of leisure travel to create positive emotions (Graburn, 2001).

A challenge in understanding the role of positive emotions in leisure travel is measurement. Emotional experiences are short-lived (Rosenberg, 1998), remembered imprecisely (Fredrickson, 2000), and strikingly varied (Fredrickson, 1998; Frijda, 2007). Therefore, any accurate representation of an emotional experience requires frequent measurements over time (Fredrickson, 2000). Furthermore, since Clawson and Knetsch wrote in 1966 that “the total recreation experience is almost always much broader” than what occurs between travel to destination and travel home (p. 33), it has been understood that leisure travel experiences may



cause positive emotions well before travel begins and well after it ends. Consequently, understanding the positive emotions that result from leisure travel experiences requires measuring them frequently before, during, and after travel.

Unfortunately, a comprehensive review of existing literature did not uncover such studies. A number of studies suggest, however, that positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel may follow a *peak model*, with positive emotions increasing before leisure travel, elevated during the experience itself, and declining afterwards. While the peak model is compelling, studies that support it fail to measure positive emotions rigorously. These studies measure constructs related to positive emotions, such as positive moods, without measuring positive emotions directly. Also, measurement in these studies is incomplete across time. They measure either too infrequently (e.g., once every several weeks, Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004b; Nawijn et al, 2010) or neglect to measure at all *before* travel begins (e.g., Nawijn, 2009; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004a).

The purpose of this study was to determine how positive emotions associated with leisure travel develop. To that effect, a study measuring positive emotions using rigorous, theoretically sound instruments to measure positive emotions on a daily basis before, during, and after leisure travel was necessary. The present study meets this need with a sixteen-day profile of day-to-day positive emotion development associated with two leisure travel groups. The two groups consisted of mature adults participating in 1- to 4-day leisure travel experiences focused on model aviation competition and Civil War history, respectively. In the sections that follow, I review background literature that frames the need for this study, present the methods and findings of the study, and propose several theoretical and practical applications.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

To form a conceptual foundation for the present study, I review studies of positive emotions from the social psychology field, demonstrating that current social psychological

research of positive emotions excludes leisure travel experiences. Subsequently, I provide an overview of research linking leisure travel to positive emotions over time, focusing on the *peak model* of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. I discuss measurement limitations of research on positive emotions during leisure travel over time, and how it neglects specific positive emotions and uses incomplete measurement across time. I begin by providing working definitions of key constructs related to emotions for the purposes of this manuscript.

### *Definitions*

The research discussed in this review of literature uses three related psychological constructs, emotions, moods, and affect, according to distinctions spelled out in the seminal work by Rosenberg (1998). Rosenberg writes that, “*emotions* (original emphasis) are acute, intense, and typically brief psychophysiological changes that result from a response to a meaningful situation in one's environment” (p. 250). Emotions are short-lived, powerful subjective feelings that occur in the foreground of consciousness, demand immediate attention, and motivate behavior (Frijda, 2007). Examples of emotions include the amusement individuals feel when they hear a great joke and the excitement of watching final seconds in a close basketball game. Emotions occupy individuals' awareness and directly and powerfully affect behavior. For example, people amused at a joke cannot help laughing, and sports fans at a game cannot resist cheering their team, caught up in the contagious excitement (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2002).

*Moods*, on the other hand, are subjective feelings that “have a background influence on consciousness” (Rosenberg, 1998, p. 240), come and go gradually while individuals attend to other matters, and do not directly or immediately motivate behavior (Rosenberg, 1998). For example, a person might be in a good mood on a sunny day, unconsciously perceiving their surroundings more positively, but an incident such as an argument on the same sunny day still has the potential to make that person feel angry, yell, and frown. According to Fredrickson (2001),

positive moods motivate individuals to continue present lines of thought, a “lowest common denominator” of positive emotions and positive moods (p. 219). Positive emotions, in contrast, carry the “additional functions” of broadening thinking and behavior (p. 219), ultimately triggering beneficial processes (Fredrickson, 1998, 2004).

*Affect* is a general term for subjective psychological feeling states, such as moods and emotions, as well as affective traits, such as having a warm or hostile personality (Rosenberg, 1998). In other words, moods as well as emotions are subsumed under affect. Measures of affect may be modified to measure either emotions or moods, but on their own, these measures conflate emotions and moods (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Therefore, unlike emotions in particular, affect in general “is often free-floating and objectless,” (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 218), that is, affect is not necessarily about anything. Positive emotions and positive moods frequently coincide (Fredrickson, 1998), but their roles differ (Fredrickson, 1998, 2000, 2001; Rosenberg, 1998), as positive emotions have the power to positively broaden thinking and behavior. A mood or emotion is considered *positive* if it is inherently pleasing and desirable (Fredrickson, 1998).

The present study examines the day-to-day development of positive emotions in the context of *leisure travel*. The World Tourism Organization, a branch of the United Nations dedicated to documenting travel trends, defines tourism as travel away from home lasting more than one night and less than one year for leisure, business, and other purposes. Leisure travel is the subset of tourism (as defined by the World Tourism Organization, 1994) undertaken for purposes of leisure.

#### *Why positive emotions?*

An exciting body of findings from social psychology (summarized in Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) has brought positive emotions into the spotlight of social science. This work suggests that positive emotions—short-lived mental states that are inherently enjoyable and desired—are not only sought for their own sake, but also create positive, enduring outcomes,

including social success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), resilience (Cohn et al., 2009), and life satisfaction (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008).

The broaden-and-build theory is a concise evolutionary explanation for the enduring adaptive outcomes of positive emotions that is supported by empirical research (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). The broaden-and-build theory asserts that, when individuals experience positive emotions, patterns of thought and behavior become more broad, open, and creative (Fredrickson, 1998). Such patterns of thought and behavior facilitate adaptive building of durable resources, such as self-knowledge, resilience, friendships, and healthy habits, over the long term (Fredrickson, 2004). Different positive emotions trigger distinct beneficial processes, and some are more meaningful and therefore more potent than others (Fredrickson, 2000).

Fredrickson (1998) implicated four specific positive emotions in beneficial broaden-and-build processes. These include love, interest, joy, and contentment. According to Fredrickson (1998), love consists of positive feelings in the context of interpersonal relationships. Cognitive changes sparked by love include urges to know and understand others (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996), which facilitate strengthening of existing relationships and building of new ones (Fredrickson, 1998; Singh, 2002). Interest, theorized to be the most frequent human emotion (Izard, 1977), facilitates the pursuit of novel information and experiences (Fredrickson, 1998). Interested individuals think in open and receptive ways that help them learn and absorb relevant ideas from their context (Izard, 1977). Joy, a more precise term for mirth or happiness, urges play behavior, in turn making individuals more creative (Frijda, 2007). Contentment is akin to calm and relaxation and prompts self-reflection and savoring (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007), leading to a more coherent and positive self-image (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Fredrickson, 1998).

Cohn et al. (2009) have shown that the valuable outcomes of positive emotions such as love, joy, interest, and contentment translate into enduring quality of life. Other positive emotions are also thought to create valuable outcomes, such as life transformations facilitated by awe

(Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Research of outcomes stemming from less-known positive emotions such as awe, however, is only in beginning stages (Keltner & Haidt, 2003).

The discovery of such processes stemming from positive emotions has spawned vigorous research programs to infuse greater levels of positive emotions in people's lives (Fredrickson, 2009; Lyubomirsky, 2008). These research programs have made valuable contributions by pioneering rigorous daily measurement of emotions (Cohn et al., 2009) and sophisticated, within-participant analyses of day-to-day development (e.g., Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson, 2009). Such measurements and analyses are necessitated by the short-lived, frequent nature of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2000). Unfortunately, besides a seminal study of meditation classes (Fredrickson et al., 2008), few solutions that reliably and repeatedly elevate positive emotions across different people and personalities have been identified. However, social psychological research of positive emotions has largely ignored leisure experiences, and more specifically, leisure travel experiences.

Leisure travel experiences are understood to be a source of positive emotions in people's lives (Nawijn, 2009; Yarnal, 2005) and believed to be important for quality of life (Nawijn et al., 2010; Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009). Graburn (2001) portrays leisure travel as a secular ritual that boosts positive emotions perennially. Graburn theorizes that positive emotions such as joy and interest are important before, during, and after leisure travel, bringing attention to the role of positive emotions in leisure travel over time. In a recent groundbreaking study, Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu (2010) linked findings on positive emotions and quality of life into a single coherent model. Sirgy et al. found that individuals' feelings toward events in their most recent leisure trip explained variation in their satisfaction with various domains of their lives. This finding suggests that positive emotions experienced during leisure travel may be a mechanism contributing to quality of life. In sum, the context of leisure travel holds promise to further the study of positive emotions by demonstrating increases in positive emotions over time, a goal of social

psychologists. A number of existing studies, discussed in the following section, have documented such increases in positive emotions associated with leisure travel.

### *Positive emotions in leisure travel*

A number of leisure and recreation studies portray leisure travel as a positive experience, boosting day-to-day positive emotions within participants well above baseline levels. This literature is limited by two substantial shortcomings, however.

First, while positive emotions are more potent than positive moods or positive affect in general (Fredrickson, 2001), existing studies (e.g., Nawijn, 2010; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004a; Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003) measure either positive moods or positive affect, not positive emotions. Positive moods are pleasant subjective feelings that neither occupy consciousness nor directly motivate beneficial processes such as broadening and building (Fredrickson, 2001; Rosenberg, 1998). Positive affect is a construct that conflates positive moods and positive emotions (Rosenberg, 1998), making it impossible to distinguish between the effects of particular positive emotions. Lack of specific attention to positive emotions is unfortunate considering that positive emotions are beneficial antecedents of quality of life (Fredrickson, 2004), and some positive emotions are especially meaningful and powerful (Fredrickson, 2000).

Second, studies linking positive emotions to leisure travel use incomplete measurement across time. Existing research either contains too few measurements to reveal the development of positive emotions from day to day (e.g., Nawijn et al., 2010; Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, & Marktl, 2000), or is limited to a time period during and after leisure travel with no measurement prior to travel (e.g., Nawijn, 2009; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000). Such measurement limitations preclude conclusions about experiences of positive emotions over time, given the frequency and brevity of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2000; Frijda, 2007). Additionally, most of these studies ignore the effects of weekends, which regularly boost positive emotions (Chow, Ram, Boker,

Fujita, & Clore, 2005). Chow et al., for example, found that joy, contentment, and love peaked every Saturday in eight weeks of daily emotion data collected from college students.

Most studies linking leisure travel with positive emotions over time (e.g., Hammitt, 1980; Nawijn, 2009; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000) support a *peak model* (Figure 3-1), which suggests that positive emotions build as leisure travel nears (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Graburn, 2001). The leisure travel experience itself contains the highest level (*peak*) of positive emotions, as seen in Hammitt (1980) and Strauss-Blasche et al. (2000), followed by a decline in positive emotions upon return from leisure travel (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004a). The peak model is supported by early studies of nature-based leisure travel (Hammitt, 1980; More & Payne, 1978), theoretical work on a general theory of tourism by Graburn (2001), studies of Austrian health tourists' moods (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000, 2004a, 2004b), and population studies in the Netherlands (Nawijn, 2009, Nawijn et al., 2010). In contrast to these findings, a single study (Wirtz et al., 2003) suggests that anticipating and reflecting on leisure travel may be more emotionally positive than leisure travel itself. The following discussion details the findings and shortcomings of these studies.

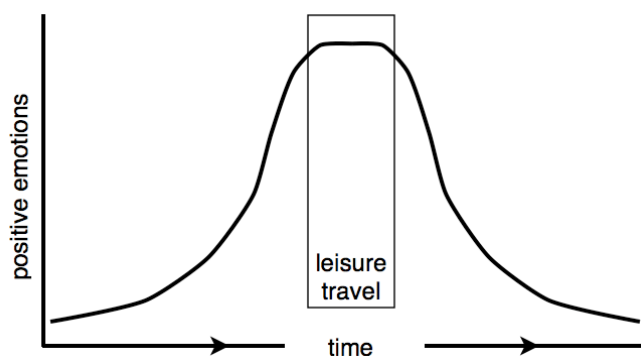


Figure 3-1: The peak model of positive emotions associated with leisure travel over time.

*Early research in nature-based leisure travel.* The *peak model* originates in the classic text on nature-based leisure travel experiences by Clawson and Knetsch (1966). Clawson and Knetsch presented nature-based leisure travel as including five phases: anticipation, travel to

destination, participation in the experience, travel from the destination, and recollection. They suggest that positive emotions increase over the anticipation and travel-to phases as the experience itself approaches. Positive emotions peak during the experience itself, then gradually decline as the individual travels back from the destination and reflects on the experience while re-entering a non-leisure-travel daily routine.

Two early studies addressed the Clawson and Knetsch (1966) model in nature-based leisure travel settings. More and Payne (1978) surveyed recreation participants at three parks upon entry and exit with a checklist of moods. They found that participants enjoyed positive moods at the beginning and end of their recreation experiences, with slightly more positive moods at the beginning. Because More and Payne used only these two measurement occasions, with no measurement during the experience, their design precluded conclusive support for the peak model. Also, they measured positive moods, which do not carry the potency of positive emotions.

Extending this work, Hammitt (1980) surveyed botany students going on a field trip to a bog. Hammitt measured at five occasions within a single day, allegedly capturing anticipation, travel-to, participation, travel-from, and recollection phases (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966). Hammitt found that positive affect, which loaded onto factors roughly corresponding to the positive emotions of joy and interest as described in Fredrickson (1998), peaked during the experience and was lowest during reflection. Hammitt measured positive affect, which conflates emotions and moods. Also, the experience he studied was short-lived, taking only a few hours, and required for participants to complete college class requirements. Thus, it hardly fits the picture of leisure travel (Graburn, 2001). Furthermore, Hammitt's study examined a single group, greatly limiting the generalizability of his findings. Nevertheless, Hammitt's study offered preliminary support for the peak model.

*The peak model in Graburn's general theory of tourism.* Graburn (2001) independently articulated the peak model of positive emotions in his theoretical treatment of leisure travel as a



ritual experience. He characterized emotions that motivated tourists as “something positive...that they cannot easily experience at home” (p. 43). Then, once the experience neared, there was “a happy anticipation...an exciting middle...and a bittersweet ending” (p. 45). With this assertion, Graburn extended the notion of tourism as a ritual in which “profane” daily life is transformed into “sacred” leisure travel, which includes positive emotions (p. 42). Graburn contended that “rituals of preparation,” such as packing and booking reservations (p. 46), facilitate anticipatory positive emotions prior to travel. Positive emotions after the leisure travel experience, according to Graburn, decline out of reluctance to return to profane daily life. Graburn’s references to specific positive emotions, such as joy (“happy,” p. 45) and interest (“exciting,” p. 45), suggest that specific positive emotions may develop differently before, during, and after a leisure travel experience. This idea is altogether untested, however, which is unfortunate given the variety of valued outcomes linked to specific positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2000, 2001). Empirical studies of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel have instead focused on moods or the more general construct of affect.

*Mood studies of Austrian health tourists.* Several studies supporting the peak model originate with Strauss-Blasche and colleagues’ research program of Austrians’ health-based leisure travel experiences. In a fifteen-week study beginning with three weeks of leisure travel to a spa, Strauss-Blasche et al. (2004a) found that positive moods were elevated during the leisure travel, especially toward the end of the experience, and then declined within one week to a baseline level. Commendably, Strauss-Blasche et al. (2004a) accounted for possible weekend effects, a source of variation in day-to-day positive emotions (Chow et al., 2005). Unfortunately, Strauss-Blasche et al. did not measure positive moods before the experience began, so the rise of these moods from baseline is not understood. Also, Strauss-Blasche et al. studied only one group of travelers (visitors to a single spa), limiting the generalizability of findings.

Extending their previous work to include pre-travel measurement and two groups of travelers, Strauss-Blasche et al. (2004b) measured positive moods two weeks before, twice

during, and five weeks after three-week alpine hiking leisure travel experiences. While this study included measurement before leisure travel, only four measurements were made: two weeks before the experience, two and eighteen days into the experience, and seven weeks after the experience. Therefore, while positive moods were elevated during the leisure travel experience, consistent with the peak model, Strauss-Blasche et al. (2004b) did not measure daily, which is necessary to reveal the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. A third study (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000) used only three measurements, excluding any measurement during the leisure travel experience itself. All three studies by Strauss-Blasche and colleagues either miss measuring before or during the leisure travel experience or do not measure frequently enough to determine day-to-day linear development, limiting findings to before-during-after comparisons. Furthermore, each study focuses on positive moods, less salient and less potent psychological cousins to positive emotions.

*Population studies in Netherlands.* Two studies by Nawijn and colleagues suggest that the peak model holds over different time scales. Nawijn et al. (2010) found that positive affect over six months peaks closest to the occasion of a leisure travel vacation, while daily positive moods during leisure travel rise at the beginning of the trip and decline at the end (Nawijn, 2009). Unfortunately, Nawijn et al. (2010) did not measure during the leisure travel experience, and Nawijn (2009) did not measure before and after. Therefore, neither study tells a complete story of day-to-day development before, during, and after leisure travel within the same group of participants. Additionally, both studies use measures that do not specifically address positive emotions. Nawijn et al. (2010) used a general four-item affect scale that conflates moods, emotions, and motivation, while Nawijn (2009) measured positive moods instead of positive emotions.

*Evidence not supporting the peak model.* In a single study questioning the peak model, Wirtz et al. (2003) found that undergraduate students expected and recalled higher levels of positive affect from their leisure travels over spring break than they reported during the actual

experience. This finding suggests that higher positive emotions associated with leisure travel may occur during anticipatory and reflective phases, not during the experience itself, in contrast to the peak model. Unfortunately, rather than measuring positive affect before and after leisure travel, Wirtz et al. only used these pre- and post-measurement occasions to ask participants to predict and recall emotions felt during leisure travel. Therefore, the focus of their study was affective forecasting and recollection, not the development of positive emotions over time. Additionally, Wirtz et al. measured positive affect, rather than distinct positive emotions, conflating positive emotions and positive moods and neglecting the possibility that some positive emotions contributed more than others to the findings observed.

In sum, two substantial shortcomings prevent extant studies from providing convincing support for the peak model of positive emotions over time. First, existing studies measure positive moods or positive affect instead of positive emotions, therefore missing the potency carried by positive emotions such as love, joy, interest, and contentment. Second, these studies use incomplete measurement across time. Existing studies either omit measuring positive emotions before leisure travel begins, or do not measure frequently enough to determine if the development of positive emotions from day to day is consistent with the peak model.

Understanding the day-to-day development in positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel is important to understanding and, eventually, managing the emotional experience of leisure travel (Stebbins, 2007) and maximizing the positive processes that result (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007), such as broadening and building (Fredrickson, 1998, 2004). Positive emotions form powerful experiences that create meaning in our lives (Fredrickson, 2000) and trigger positive processes that build quality of life (Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson, 2004). Their role in leisure travel over time deserves close attention.

### *Purpose*

Existing literature on positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel supports a *peak model*, which suggests that positive emotions increase leading up to leisure travel, are highest during the travel experience, and decline afterwards. Rigorous measurement of positive emotions that permits attention to aggregate and discrete positive emotions is lacking from this literature. Complete measurement across time is also lacking, including a developmental daily account of positive emotions before, during, and after a leisure travel experience. The present study uses a developmental within-participants design (Ram & Grimm, 2007) to determine if the *peak model* is a plausible account of day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after a leisure travel experience. I addressed this purpose by graphically and statistically explaining 16 days of daily positive emotion data, including 1-4 days of leisure travel, provided by 25 participants in two separate leisure travel experiences.

I tested the following hypotheses, which are based on foundational literature that theoretically (e.g., Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Graburn, 2001) and empirically (e.g., Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000; Hammitt, 1980) supports the peak model of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel experiences. If the positive emotions of participants in leisure travel experiences are consistent with the peak model,

1a. Within participants, daily positive emotions over a 16-day period centered on a leisure travel experience are higher during leisure travel than before and after, over and above the effects of weekends.

1b. Between participants, the within-participant effects of leisure travel on positive emotions will differ according to marital status, retirement status, personality, travel group, and age group.

2a. Within participants, daily positive emotions over a 16-day period will increase leading up to leisure travel and decline following leisure travel, over and above the effects of weekends.

2b. Between participants, within-participant increases and decreases in positive emotions before and after leisure travel will differ according to marital status, retirement status, personality, travel group and age group.

## METHODS

*Sample*

The sample for the study consisted of participants in two leisure travel groups. One group (CW) participated in a three-and-one-half day group tour of a Civil War battlefield in Virginia, U.S., organized by the alumni association of a large Eastern U.S. University. The second group (MA) engaged in a one-day model airplane contest in North Carolina, U.S., organized by two informal model aviation clubs. I purposefully selected (Trochim, 2006) these two groups, meaning that I chose them based on criteria necessitated by the study purpose. As the purpose was to determine the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel, I used the following criteria to select the studied groups: their experiences constituted leisure travel (World Tourism Organization, 1994), they planned their experiences sufficiently far ahead of time to permit data collection, and included participants willing to provide emotion data on a daily basis before, during, and after leisure travel. I chose to sample two groups to increase the geographic and socioeconomic diversity of participants, and to generate findings that held across more than one leisure travel experience.

Precedents for the present study (e.g., Nawijn, 2010; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000) have often used purposive samples, usually of participants in a single experience (e.g., Hammitt, 1980) or students at a single school accessible to researchers (Wirtz et al., 2003). Findings of such samples are not generalizable to larger populations. The present study extends the sampling in these studies with purposive sampling of two experiences, rather than only one. Sampling from two groups reinforces the findings as applicable to other leisure travel experiences. Rather than arising from a single, unique context, we follow the footsteps of Strauss-Blasche et al. (2004b), who studied two different alpine hiking experiences. Both groups in the present study consisted of mature adults, an important population in research on leisure travel (Dann, 2001; Lehto, Jang, Achana, & O'Leary, 2008; Nimrod, 2008).

Nineteen of eighty CW participants agreed to take part in the study, of whom 13 provided sufficient data to be included in analysis (16% useable response rate). The director of the CW travel experience emailed a follow-up request to participants, but did not permit the authors to contact participants a second time for a personal follow-up, which is recommended (Yun & Trumbo, 2006). Fifteen of twenty-two MA participants agreed to take part in the study. Eleven provided sufficient data to be included in analysis (50% useable response rate). The overall useable response rate was 25%, higher than comparable studies (Fredrickson et al., 2009; Strauss-Blasche, et al., 2000) and not unusual for a mixed-mode survey with an email component (Yun & Trumbo, 2006).

### *Measures*

I measured the dependent variables of positive emotions, independent within-participant variables of time, including travel, anticipation, reflection, and weekend periods, and between-participant variables of travel group, gender, age, marital status, and retirement status.

*Positive emotions.* I measured positive emotions on a daily basis using the modified Differential Emotion Scale (mDES; Cohn et al., 2009). The mDES contains nineteen emotion terms (interested, surprised, ashamed, amused, loving, contemptuous, embarrassed, proud, joyous, guilty, grateful, angry, hopeful, sad, afraid, disgusted, content, awed, and compassionate) presented in a 5-point Likert-type response format based on how strongly participants have felt each emotion on the day in question (“very slightly or none at all,” “little,” “moderate,” “quite a bit,” and “extreme”). Asking participants to recall strongest (rather than overall or average) experience of an emotion greatly reduces recall error (Fredrickson, 2000), a common issue in emotion measurement.

In line with contemporary research of positive emotions (e.g., Fredrickson, 1998; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) the mDES is based on a circumplex model of emotion, with positive emotions and negative emotions representing two independent, orthogonal dimensions of

emotions. The circumplex model represents a convergence of emotion theory upheld by numerous social psychological studies (Russell, 2003). The mDES, a modification of Izard's (1977) Differential Emotion Scale, is designed to remedy the exclusion of low-activation positive emotions (e.g., contentment, hope) in other circumplex model emotion scales (e.g., PANAS, Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998). Numerous studies (Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson, 2009; Fredrickson et al., 2009) have demonstrated the reliability and validity of the mDES. I used the mDES emotion scales in their entirety, including positive as well as negative emotions, for completeness and consistency with extant studies of positive emotions over time (e.g., Cohn et al., 2009; Wirtz et al., 2003). For the present study, I averaged the ten positive emotions in the mDES (interested, amused, loving, proud, joyous, grateful, hopeful, content, awed, and compassionate) to measure positive emotions overall. I also separately investigated the specific positive emotions of love, interest, joy, and contentment. These four positive emotions are more extensively described and linked to positive outcomes than the other five listed (Fredrickson, 1998) and have been associated with mature adult leisure experiences (Mitas, Qian, & Yarnal, 2007). Therefore, theoretical precedents existed for testing hypotheses based on the specific positive emotions of love, joy, interest, and contentment (Fredrickson, 1998), as well as positive emotions on average (Russell, 2003; Watson et al., 1988), but not for other specific positive emotions. I asked participants to write the date at the top of each page to link each day of emotion data with its temporal context (before, during, after leisure travel; weekend or weekday).

*Within-participant measurement of time.* The hypotheses concerned linear day-to-day within-participant development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. Hypotheses also required controlling for within-participant effects of weekends. Therefore, I dummy-coded four independent variables to represent hypothesized developmental effects for each occasion within each participant. A variable to represent days spent in leisure travel (Travel Period) was coded as 1 for travel days and 0 for non-travel days. Similarly, a weekend variable was coded 0 for weekdays and 1 for weekends.

A variable to represent linear growth leading up to leisure travel (Anticipation Period) counted up to 0 from the beginning of data collection to the beginning of the leisure travel experience. For example, if a participant commenced travel eight days after the data collection began, her Anticipation Period variable would take the values -7, -6, -5, -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, and 0. A variable to represent linear decline following leisure travel (Reflection Period) reversed this pattern, counting up from 0 after the end of the leisure travel experience. If a participant began travel eight days (as above) and ended it ten days after starting data collection, her Reflection Period variable would take the values 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. This coding scheme permitted analysis of day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel as linear effects, facilitating interpretation of results (Ram & Grimm, 2007).

*Between-participant variables.* I tested the effects of six between-participant effects on positive emotions over time. Based on extensive research supporting the durable genetic foundation of positive emotion variation between individuals (summarized in Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004), I measured participants' personality to distinguish the stable genetic effects on positive emotions from the effects of leisure travel. I measured personality according to the well-established five-factor model (McCrae & Costa, 1999). Most measures of the five-factor model use large numbers of items to ensure reliability (e.g., NEO-PI-R, 240 items, Costa & McCrae, 1992). Because such a long instrument would have caused undue participant burden (Trochim, 2006), I used the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), which preserves the validity of longer five-factor measures of personality while maintaining acceptable reliability.

I selected four demographic variables based on research evidence suggesting that age (Felischer & Pizam, 2002; Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002), gender (Felischer & Pizam, 2002; Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002), marital status (Carr & Cohen, 2009), and retirement status (Nimrod, 2008; Norman, Daniels, McGuire, & Norman, 2001) shape leisure travel experiences. I did not measure



income because participants often find items measuring income threatening, invalidating the responses (Juster & Smith, 1997). Also, according to Norman et al. (2001), retirement status explains the effects of income on leisure travel behavior in mature adults.

All four demographic variables were dichotomized for clarity of interpretation. Gender was coded as either male or female. Because the studied experiences targeted mature adults, all participants were above the age of 45. The age was dichotomized into middle age (45-59) and older age (60 and older) according to the request of the manager of CW experience, who did not allow researchers to ask participants exact age. Marital status and retirement status variables were also dichotomized; the vast majority of participants were married (84%) and working part-time after retirement from full time work, or working full time (29% and 58%, respectively). Therefore, to maintain the statistical power when testing effects of marital status, a participant living with a partner (n=1) was grouped with married participants, while divorced (n=1), widowed (n=1), and single (n=1) participants were grouped into a second category. Along the same lines, participants fully retired from work (n=3) were grouped with those working part-time after retirement, while participants working full-time comprised a second category. Dichotomizing these variables does limit the opportunity for sophisticated analyses of between-person differences, a limitation that could be addressed in studies with larger, more diverse samples in the future. A final between-person variable comprised leisure travel group, with the Civil War battlefield tour group (CW) coded as 0 and the model aviation contest group (MA) coded as 1.

### *Data Collection*

Data collection occurred in two phases. The first phase consisted of an intake questionnaire, the second, a booklet of 16 daily emotion questionnaires. I used the intake questionnaire to collect personality and demographic data, as well as mailing addresses for subsequent data collection. Three to five months before each leisure travel experience, I emailed

participants links to a consent form and the intake questionnaire. I used an online questionnaire for several reasons: online questionnaires are inexpensive (Dillman & Bowker, 2001; Yun & Trumbo, 2006), an important consideration given budget limitations, access to the Internet is increasing, especially among mature adults (Dillman & Bowker, 2001; Yun & Trumbo, 2006), and online questionnaires reduce sampling, measurement, and non-response sources of error if carefully designed (Dillman & Bowker, 2001). Five participants in the MA group did not have regular Internet access at the time of the study and received the consent form and intake questionnaire by mail instead.

Two weeks before each experience, I mailed daily emotion questionnaire booklets to participants. In contrast to the intake questionnaire, daily emotion questionnaires were provided in hard copy booklets for participants' convenience, as Internet access was not readily available at the leisure travel locations. I asked participants to record data for eighteen days. The measurement period of eighteen days made it possible to capture participants' emotions for a total of sixteen days while compensating for variation in dates that participants started their booklets. I compensated participants \$5 for completing each intake questionnaire, and an additional \$5 for completing each booklet, following the successful example of Cohn et al.'s (2009) study of meditation classes.

I measured emotions for a period of 16 days for three reasons. First, a 16-day period includes weekdays traveling, weekend days traveling, weekend days not traveling, and weekdays not traveling, making it possible to control for weekly fluctuations in positive emotions found by Kleiber, Larson, and Csikszentmihalyi (1986) and Chow et al. (2005). Second, baseline measurements of positive emotions 2 to 5 days before leisure travel have been used in previous studies of positive emotions during leisure travel (Milman, 1998; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000; Wirtz et al., 2003). Therefore, the assumption held by existing literature is that day-to-day linear increases in positive emotions begin within 5 days of travel. However, the day-to-day development of positive emotions before leisure travel is not empirically known. Third, existing

studies that measured day-to-day development after leisure travel found that affect declined to baseline within one week (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000). For these reasons, a 16-day daily data collection period was deemed adequate to capture weekend effects as well as increases in positive emotions before and decreases in positive emotions after leisure travel. The following diagram (Figure 3-2) illustrates the data collection process.

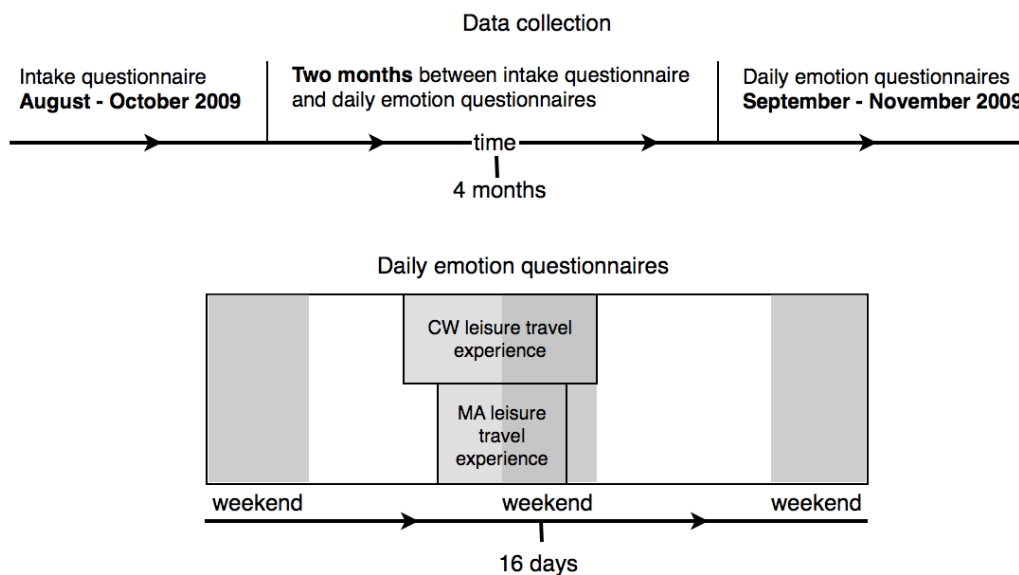


Figure 3-2. Data collection.

### *Analysis*

Data were entered into a spreadsheet and exported for analysis using the open-source statistical package R 2.5.0 (2004-2007, R Foundation for Statistical Computing). Analysis of data proceeded in three phases: description, graphing, and hypothesis testing. Description consisted of calculating means and standard deviations of interval-level variables (positive emotions, personality) and frequencies of categorical variables (age, gender, marital status, retirement status). Graphing consisted of line plots showing the average development of dependent variables (overall positive emotions, love, joy, interest, and contentment) over the measurement period.

Data from the two groups were displayed on separate graphs to clarify the difference in duration of the leisure travel experiences.

I used linear mixed-effects models to test the hypotheses. Linear mixed-effects models are optimal for testing hypotheses in repeated-measures data because they allow for testing development of dependent variables (e.g., positive emotions) over time within participants independently from random variation between participants (Ram & Grimm, 2007). For each dependent variable, I first tested a model of the independent variables (Travel Period or Anticipation Period and Reflection Period) regressed on the dependent variable. I then added the weekend variable, followed by between-participant variables, one at a time. I retained each variable only if significant improvement in model fit resulted. I also tested the interaction of each potential between-participant variable with within-participant variables of interest. If any resulting interaction was not significant, I removed it from the final model. Random effects that prevented the model from converging, a consequence of the small number of participants (N. Ram, personal communication, 15 March 2010) were removed as well. In no case did random effects significantly improve the model. This model building procedure allowed testing of the complex hypotheses of the present study with the minimal power to detect less-than-moderate between-individual differences (Cohen, 1992) afforded by a participant group of 25 individuals (N. Ram, personal communication, 4 March 2010).

### *Limitations*

I acknowledge a number of limitations to the following findings. As with most empirical social science studies, a higher response rate would have further improved the validity of the findings. Likewise, a probability sample of leisure travelers, if possible to obtain, would have produced results generalizable to a larger population. Finally, concerns about participant burden expressed by the individuals involved in both leisure travel groups, as well as the author, prevented multiple measures of positive emotions (e.g., PANAS, Watson et al., 1988) and a

longer period of measurement, which may have yielded even more complete information. An opportunity for participants to add or modify emotion terms according to their own interpretations of their emotions could also strengthen future studies on this topic.

## RESULTS

### *Descriptive statistics*

The following table (Table 3-1) displays the means, standard deviations, and ranges of interval-level variables (Trochim, 2006), including overall positive emotions, love, joy, interest, and contentment across occasions and participants, as well as five dimensions of personality. Note that interest is the highest average positive emotion of the four analyzed, and that love has the greatest variation between participant-occasions.

Table 3-1: Descriptive statistics of interval-level variables.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical range	Observed range
Overall positive emotions	2.54	0.66	1 - 5	1 - 3.2
Love	2.77	0.99	1 - 5	1 - 5
Joy	2.51	1	1 - 5	1 - 5
Interest	3.04	0.94	1 - 5	1 - 5
Contentment	2.73	0.92	1 - 5	1 - 5
Extraversion	-0.32	3.01	-6 - 6	-5 - 5
Openness to experience	2.08	2.08	-6 - 6	-3 - 5
Conscientiousness	3.24	2.79	-6 - 6	-3 - 6
Agreeableness	2.48	2.52	-6 - 6	-3 - 6
Emotional stability	3.64	1.72	-6 - 6	1 - 6

The overall positive emotion variable is based on a mean for each participant at each measurement occasion of ten positive emotion items (love, joy, interest, contentment, amusement, pride, gratitude, hope, awe, and compassion). The Cronbach alpha for this variable was 0.87, which is evidence of ample inter-item reliability (Trochim, 2006). Conscientiousness, extraversion, and emotional stability dimensions of personality exhibited acceptable reliability, with absolute correlations of 0.6 or higher based on two items per dimension. Openness to experience and agreeableness exhibited mild absolute correlations, 0.11 and 0.31 respectively, a limitation to reliability of using brief measures such as the TIPI in the present study (Gosling et al., 2003). Histograms of all outcome variables (overall positive emotions, love, joy, interest, and contentment) demonstrated that all outcome variables were approximately normally distributed. The following table (Table **3-2**) displays the distributions of all categorical variables.

**Table 3-2:** Distributions of categorical variables.

Variable	Distribution
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	19 (76%)
Female	6 (24%)
<b>Marital status</b>	
Married or living with partner	22 (88%)
Single, divorced, or widowed	3 (12%)
<b>Retirement status</b>	
Retired	11 (44%)
Working full time	14 (56%)
<b>Leisure travel group</b>	
CW	13 (52%)
MA	12 (48%)

*Graphs of emotions over time*

Average positive emotions and emotions of love, joy, interest and contentment were graphed separately for the two groups to account for different leisure travel durations. Graphs for both groups (Figure 3-3) share four apparent visual features: a peak of positive emotions during the leisure travel experience, especially interest, a rise in positive emotions preceding leisure travel, a decline following, and smaller peaks corresponding to each weekend.

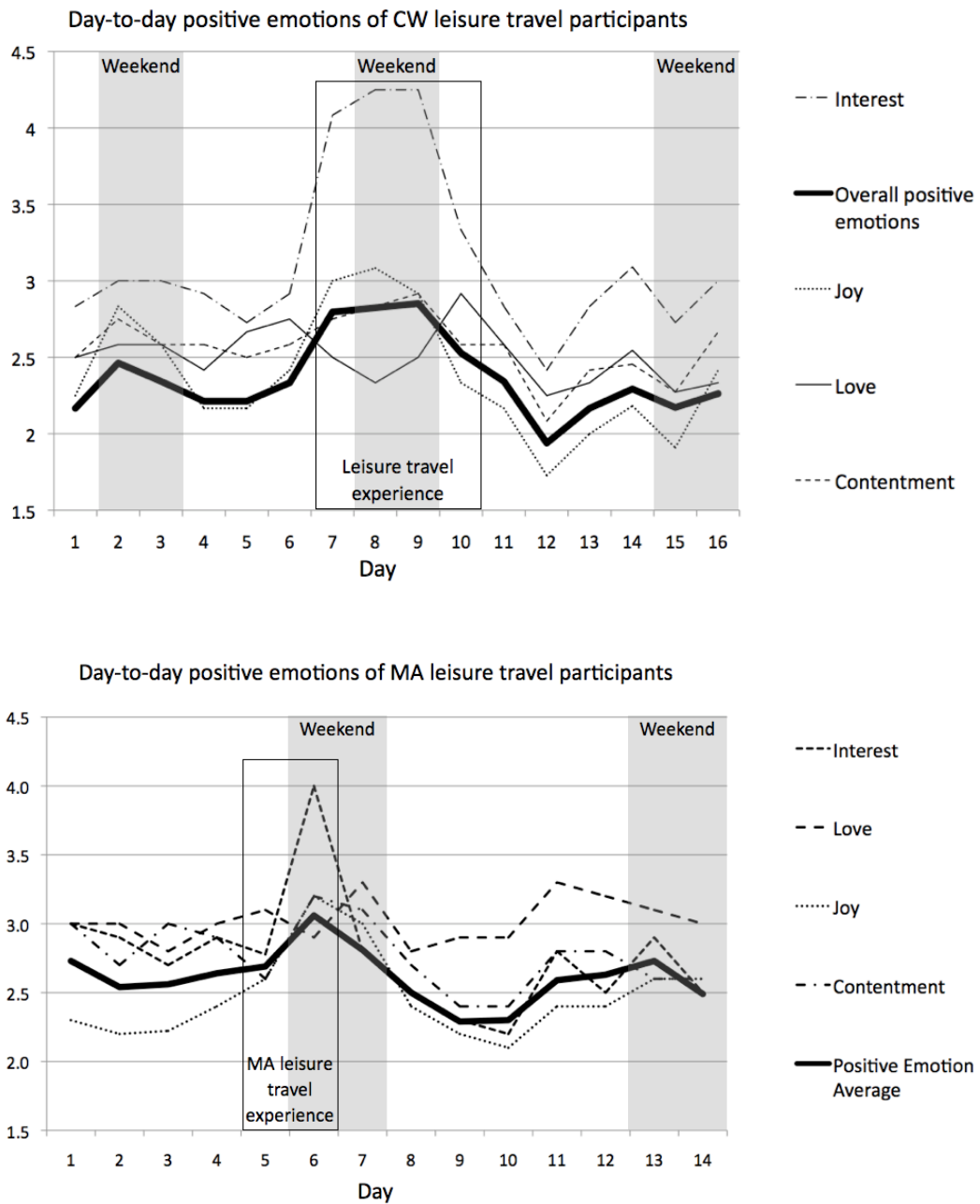


Figure 3-3. Day-to-day positive emotions separated by leisure travel experience (CW experience n=12; MA experience n=9)

The highest average within-participant levels of overall positive emotions (2.85 for CW, 3.06 for MA), joy (3.08 for CW; 3 for MA), interest (4.25 for CW, 4 for MA), and contentment (2.92 for CW; 3.2 for MA) occurred during leisure travel in both groups. The highest average



levels of love on the MA experience (3.02) immediately followed leisure travel. The highest average levels of love on the CW (2.92) experience occurred on the last day of leisure travel.

#### *Hypothesis testing*

*Hypothesis 1: Positive emotions are higher during travel.* The Travel Period variable (coded as 0 before and after travel, 1 during travel) was a significant predictor of average positive emotion, joy, interest, and contentment (Table 3-3). The Travel Period variable did not have a significant effect on the positive emotion of love. The effects of weekends, marital status, and interaction of extraversion with Travel Period significantly improved the fit of models predicting positive emotion dependent variables.

Table 3-3. Mixed-effects linear growth models over leisure travel period for positive emotions.

Effect	Positive emotions	Joy	Interest	Contentment
Within-participant fixed effects estimates				
Travel	1.8 (0.07)***	0.57 (0.13)***	1.14 (0.13)***	0.29 (0.13)*
Weekend	0.13 (0.04)**	0.30 (0.08)***		
(intercept)	1.8 (0.25)***	1.71 (0.32)***	2.83 (0.1)***	1.74 (0.32)***
Between-participant fixed effects estimates				
Marital status	0.7 (0.27)**	0.69 (0.34)*		1.078 (0.34)**
Extraversion x Travel		0.13 (0.04)**		
Random effects estimates				
Variance of Travel	0.03	0.13	0.21	0.20
Variance of intercept	0.20	0.22	0.21	0.28
Residual variance	0.16	0.58	0.49	0.41
Goodness-of-fit indices				
AIC	484.7	955.9	893	846.2
-2LL	470.6	937.8	883	834.2

*Note.* -2LL = -2 log-likelihood, relative model fit statistic.

\* $p \geq 0.05$  \*\* $p \geq 0.01$  \*\*\* $p \geq 0.001$ .

Participants enjoyed boosts of 0.29 in contentment, 0.57 in joy, and 1.14 in interest on a 5-point scale during leisure travel. Participants experienced a 0.40 point increase in average positive emotions, over and above the 0.13 point increase that resulted from weekend effects, during leisure travel. In sum, the hypothesis that positive emotions are higher during a leisure travel experience than before and after was supported for overall positive emotions, joy, interest, and contentment.

*Hypothesis 2: Positive emotions rise as leisure travel nears and decline over time after leisure travel.* The Anticipation Period and Reflection Period variables (counting up to and down from travel by day, respectively) were significant predictors of within-person change in overall positive emotion, joy, and interest (Table 3-4). Because leisure travel did not have a significant effect on the positive emotion of love, Anticipation Period and Reflection Period variables were not regressed on love. Anticipation Period and Reflection Period effects were not significant predictors of contentment. The effects of weekends, travel group (CW or MA), and interaction of Anticipation Period and Reflection Period with retirement status significantly improved the fit of models explaining positive emotion dependent variables.

Table 3-4. Mixed-effects linear growth models over anticipation and reflection periods for positive emotions.

Effect	Positive emotions	Joy	Interest
Within-participant fixed effects estimates			
Anticipation	0.04 (0.02)*	0.11 (0.03)***	0.22 (0.04)***
Reflection	- 0.05 (0.01)***	- 0.11 (0.02)***	- 0.17 (0.03)***
Weekend	0.26 (0.05)***	0.46 (0.09)***	0.46 (0.09)***
(intercept)	2.41 (0.13)***	2.66 (0.17)***	3.46 (0.14)***
Between-participant fixed effects estimates			
Group	0.37 (0.18)*		- 0.47 (0.21)*
Anticipation X Retirement Status		- 0.15 (0.05)**	
Reflection X Retirement Status		0.09 (0.04)*	
Anticipation X Group			- 0.21 (0.03)***
Reflection X Group			0.09 (0.04)*
Random effects estimates			
Variance of Anticipation	0.002		
Variance of Reflection	0.001		
Variance of intercept	0.12	0.16	0.08
Residual variance	0.16	0.61	0.60
Goodness-of-fit indices			
AIC	509.9	976.2	953.7
-2LL	488.0	958.2	935.8

*Note.* -2LL = -2 log-likelihood, relative model fit statistic.  
\*p >= 0.05 \*\*p >= 0.01 \*\*\*p >= 0.001.

On the 5-point scale measuring positive emotions, participants enjoyed increases of 0.04 points per day in overall positive emotions as leisure travel approached. Positive emotions for

both groups declined, on average, by 0.05 points per day after leisure travel. These effects were over and above the 0.26 point increases in positive emotions associated with weekends and a 0.37 point difference between CW and MA participants at baseline. Participants in the CW group enjoyed average daily increases in interest of 0.22 as leisure travel approached, an effect that was almost absent (0.01 per day) for MA participants. The decline in interest for CW participants after leisure travel was also stronger, 0.17 per day as compared to 0.08 per day for MA participants. Participants who worked full-time experienced daily increases of 0.11 points per day in joy as leisure travel approached, and decreases of 0.11 points per day following leisure travel. Retirees, on the other hand, experienced negative anticipation, with joy decreasing at an average 0.04 points per day as leisure travel approached. In sum, the hypothesis that positive emotions increase leading up to and decline following a leisure travel experience was supported for overall positive emotions, and supported in some participant groups for interest and joy.

## DISCUSSION

The present findings extend existing research linking positive emotions to leisure travel over time in three ways. First, the findings strengthen support for the peak model of positive emotions associated with leisure travel across two different groups with rigorous, complete measurement of positive emotions over time. Second, the findings provide a day-to-day account of positive emotions in the week leading up to leisure travel, a period not previously measured in the leisure travel literature. Third, the findings show different roles for the specific positive emotions of interest, joy, compassion, and love in leisure travel over time. Concurrently, the findings contribute to social psychological study of positive emotions by bringing attention to the power of leisure travel to boost positive emotions.

*Strengthening the peak model*

Previous research that links positive emotions with leisure travel over time (e.g., Hammitt, 1980; Nawijn, 2009; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004a) has provided tentative support for the peak model, suggesting that positive emotions increase before leisure travel, are elevated during leisure travel, and decline following leisure travel. This research, however, has not directly measured positive emotions. Also, existing studies have either measured too infrequently (e.g., Nawijn et al., 2010; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000) or not measured before leisure travel. Additionally, a number of studies proposing the peak model (e.g., Hammitt, 1980, Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004a) offer evidence based on a single leisure travel group. As a result, the peak model has been, at best, a tentative explanation for positive emotions associated with leisure travel over time.

The present study examined two leisure travel groups, measuring participants' positive emotions daily over 16 days centered around 1-4 days of leisure travel. This measurement design allowed a complete day-to-day picture of overall positive emotion development before leisure travel. This complete picture fits closely with the peak model, in terms of the visual appearance of the graphs as well as linear-mixed effects models predicting average within-participant development. The findings question the suggestion in Wirtz et al.'s (2003) study of undergraduate spring breakers that anticipating and recollecting on leisure travel are more positive than the experience itself. Wirtz et al., however, address the accuracy of affective forecasting and recollection (Gilbert, 2006) more than the development of positive emotions over time in leisure travel.

Of previous studies cited, only Strauss-Blasche et al. (2000) accounted for the effects of weekends, and they did so only after the leisure travel experience. The present findings support the peak model over and above weekends. Because these findings are consistent with the peak model across both groups studied, I propose that the peak model, first articulated by Clawson and Knetsch (1966) in the context of nature-based leisure travel, and independently proposed by

Graburn (2001) in a general theory of tourism, is strengthened as an explanation of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel.

#### *Extending day-to-day measurement to precede leisure travel*

Even the most detailed existing studies that address positive emotions over time during (Nawijn, 2009) and after (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004a) leisure travel omit the day-to-day development of positive emotions before leisure travel begins. The assumption in the existing literature (e.g., Nawijn et al., 2010; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000) has been that up to a week prior to leisure travel, positive emotions may begin to increase. The findings of the present study suggest that average positive emotions increased slightly (0.04 per day on a 5-point scale) during the week leading up to the studied experiences, even when periodic boosts caused by weekends are accounted for. This finding extends day-to-day developmental evidence for the peak model (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Hammitt, 1980; Graburn, 2001) into the week preceding leisure travel.

#### *Untangling specific positive emotions*

Besides strengthening support for the peak model and extending evidence in its support into the week before leisure travel, the present study differentiates the contribution of specific positive emotions to the peak in overall positive emotions found during leisure travel. Existing research that links positive emotions with leisure travel has not measured positive emotions directly. Instead it has focused on moods (e.g., Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004a; 2004b), which are less potent, or the more general construct of affect (Hammitt, 1980; Wirtz et al., 2003), which conflates moods and emotions. The present study measured positive emotions and reinforced the peak model using a valid, reliable, and specific measure (mDES; Cohn et al., 2009) based on the average of ten positive emotions. Furthermore, the present study examined the day-to-day development of four specific positive emotions. These four positive emotions were chosen for

their prominence in positive psychology literature (e.g., Izard, 1977; Fredrickson, 1998) and for their verified role in fostering positive processes (Fredrickson, 2004). These four emotions were love, joy, interest, and contentment.

The prominent peak pattern of joy and interest before, during, and after leisure travel offers empirical support for Graburn's (2001) ideas about the development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. Graburn uses language associated with interest and joy, such as "exciting" and "happy" (p. 45), respectively, to describe the rise in positive emotions before leisure travel, high positive emotions during, and decline in positive emotions after. The present findings suggest not only that the peak model is valid, but also are consistent with Graburn's insights into specific emotions present before, during, and after leisure travel. The timing of peaks in joy and interest did not entirely fit with Graburn's narrative, however. Graburn suggests that joy peaks before leisure travel in "happy anticipation" while interest peaks during leisure travel in "an exciting middle" (p. 45). However, joy and interest in the present study both peaked during the leisure travel experience, portraying a happy *and* exciting middle of the two-week period measured.

While the development of overall positive emotions, joy, and interest provided strong support for the peak model, the development of love and contentment did not. Love did not increase during leisure travel. According to Singh (2002), the connections between love and leisure travel are not established and warrant further analysis of the emotion's many components. Fredrickson (1998) also addresses the multi-component structure of love emotions. It is possible that love in general is not affected by the varieties of leisure travel studied. Specific aspects of love, however, may be affected and warrant inquiry (Singh, 2002). Contentment was higher during leisure travel, but did not follow a pattern of linear increase before or linear decrease after leisure travel as the peak model implies.

The development of love and contentment over time warrants further research. In particular, Tugade and Fredrickson (2007) raise the possibility that conventional vacations which



focus on relaxation rather than on particular activities are likely to produce feelings of contentment. The experiences studied, in contrast, are closely focused on particular activities, an emphasis that may explain the striking increases in interest during leisure travel. Within the framework of the peak model, less intense and less activity-oriented vacations may well show the opposite pattern in specific positive emotions to the present study. For instance, interest may be unaffected by such experiences while contentment not only is elevated during the experience, but rises before and gradually declines after. This possibility warrants future research that adapts the design of the present study to a more conventional leisure travel context (e.g., cruising, Yarnal, 2005) that emphasizes relaxation (Kleiber, 2000) over specific activity.

*Bringing leisure travel to the psychology of positive emotions*

The psychological study of positive emotions has demonstrated that positive emotions contribute to long-term outcomes such as good health and social success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Further research has revealed a process of “broadening and building” (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 307) that explains how positive emotions contribute to valued outcomes over time. This research has not considered the contribution that leisure travel makes to individuals’ experiences of positive emotions. The present findings demonstrate that leisure travel is a significant source of positive emotions. During the leisure travel experiences studied, participants experienced an average boost of 0.4 on a 5-point scale over and above the 0.13 boost recorded on weekends. Therefore, the boost in positive emotions experienced by individuals during leisure travel is more substantial than the one typically experienced during the weekend (Chow et al., 2005). While positive emotions rapidly return to baseline, suggesting that a brief experience of leisure travel does not boost positive emotions over the long term, short-term experiences of positive emotions convert to long-term outcomes via broadening and building processes (Fredrickson, 1998, 2004). Therefore, the positive consequences of leisure travel may far outlast positive emotions and form an important subject for future research (Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009).

Findings from the study upheld the social psychological literature about circumstances affecting positive emotions, especially in relation to the positive effects of weekends within participants (Chow et al., 2005) and the effects of marriage between participants (Etkoff, 2007). While psychologists have also found extraverts to experience higher levels of positive emotions (Diener & Seligman, 2002), the present findings demonstrate only one difference associated with extraversion: extraverts derived more joy from the leisure travel experience. The interpersonal interactions associated with extraversion, a key trait behavior for positive emotion (Diener & Seligman, 2002), may have interacted with the highly social nature of the groups studied. It is also worth noting that a larger sample may have increased power sufficiently to detect other between-participant effects of extraversion (Trochim, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study extend the understanding of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel, as well as highlighting the importance of leisure travel to research of positive emotions. Findings show that positive emotions overall, and joy and interest in particular, increase in the period leading up to leisure travel, peak during leisure travel, and decline afterwards. These findings strengthen the peak model (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Graburn, 2001) of positive emotions during leisure travel. In the following section, I discuss implications for administration of leisure travel experiences as well as avenues for future research.

### *Implications for practice*

The present study demonstrates that positive emotions increase before, peak during, and decline after leisure travel. This finding has two implications for administration of leisure travel experiences. First, the selling of leisure travel experiences based on emotions, an oft-challenged practice (e.g., MacCannell, 2001; Morgan & Pritchard, 2001; Taylor, 2001; Urbain, 1989), is not necessarily misplaced. Some leisure travel experiences clearly do boost positive emotions and, as

such, promises in travel advertising of a wonderful time for participants may be well-founded and productive, paralleling findings from tourism marketing research (e.g., Duman & Mattila, 2005; Sirgy et al., 2010). Second, the weeks preceding and following travel are untapped opportunities for practitioners to positively influence their customers' experiences, as suggested previously by Clawson and Knetsch (1966) as well as Morgan and Pritchard (2001). As impending leisure travel affects individuals' emotions before the travel experience, leisure travel operators could develop programs to further enhance the pre-travel experience, such as pre-travel social meetings of participants (see Yarnal, 2005). Similarly, tour operators could partner with memory-making services (i.e., photography, books) to further enhance positive emotions after travel. While such partnerships do exist, given Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) exhortation to include pre-travel and post-travel phases in managing leisure travel experiences, it is surprising that they have not become more common.

*Issues for future research: Does leisure travel grow quality of life?*

The present study shows that leisure travel contributes to positive emotions before, during, and after the travel experience. Social psychological studies of positive emotions, in turn, highlight quality of life outcomes such as well-being (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) and resilience (Cohn et al., 2009). There has been a recent surge in experimental research using positive emotions to build participants' quality of life (e.g., Fredrickson et al., 2008, Fredrickson, 2009, Lyubomirsky, 2008). The present findings suggest a need for a parallel research program focused on quality of life outcomes of leisure travel. While experimental research of leisure travel outcomes is difficult because an obvious control condition does not exist (as for meditation; see Fredrickson et al., 2008), longitudinal and interpretive research designs could assess the long-term effects of positive emotions arising from leisure travel on enduring quality of life. Such research could expand current interest in wellness tourism (summarized in Bushell & Sheldon,

2009) into general, broadly applicable knowledge about the positive role of leisure travel in people's lives.

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## Chapter 4

### Summary and Conclusions

#### Summary of findings

The present study was guided by four research questions. In this section, I summarize findings that address each research question then synthesize the findings to distill their theoretical and practical implications.

#### **Research question #1**

Which positive emotions are most salient in the experience of leisure travel? The interpretive microethnographic portion of the dissertation suggested that four kinds of emotions are most salient: amusement, warmth, interest, and sublime reactions. Warmth included feelings of joy, contentment, and gratitude in the context of friendly relationships. Sublime reactions included the positive emotion of awe, as well as the negative emotions, anger and sadness.

#### **Research question #2**

Which processes arising from the social context of leisure travel foster positive emotions? Four processes linking social contexts of leisure travel corresponded to the four kinds of positive emotions found to be most prevalent. Humor led to amusement, friendship created warmth, activities fostered interest, and stories of loss prompted sublime reactions (Figure 4-1).

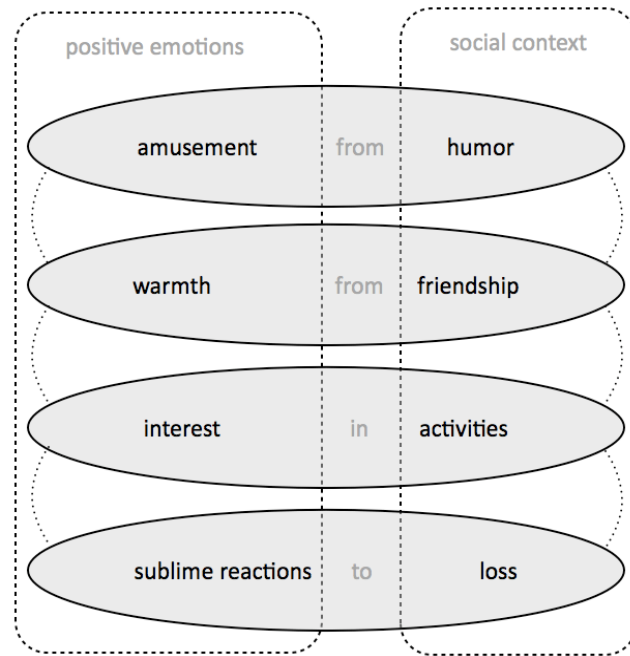


Figure 4-1: Conceptual model of findings of interpretive microethnography.

### Research question #3

Is the day-to-day development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel consistent with the peak model, increasing before leisure travel, remaining elevated during the experience, and declining after? Findings from the developmental psychometric portion of the dissertation suggested that the day-to-day development of positive emotions overall, joy, and interest were consistent with the peak model of positive emotions. Contentment was elevated during leisure travel but did not exhibit linear increase before leisure travel or linear decrease after. Love was not elevated during leisure travel. All of these effects were seen over and above the effects of weekends on day-to-day positive emotion development.

**Research question #4**

Does leisure contribute to quality of life, and if so, are positive emotions the mechanism of that change? There is not sufficient evidence to assert that leisure travel contributes to quality of life. No significant differences were found within participants in overall quality of life, health, or satisfaction with life among the four measurement occasions.

**Synthesis**

The findings of this study suggest that leisure travel increases positive emotions in mature adults, that these increases generally develop according to the *peak model*, and that particular processes arising from leisure travelers' social contexts foster positive emotions. The concurrent mixed-method design of the present study creates an opportunity to compare findings across methods, deepening the potential insights and implications of the study (Creswell, 2003). Both the interpretive microethnographic (Manuscript 1) and developmental psychometric (Manuscript 2) portions of the present study point out that many existing studies ignore the diversity of specific positive emotions. Differentiating between various positive emotions is important because a variety of positive emotions exist (Izard, 1977), and specific positive emotions prompt distinct changes in thinking and behavior (Fredrickson, 1998) and vary in personal meaning (Fredrickson, 2000). A synthesis of findings related to specific positive emotions from both manuscripts reveals a complex answer to the second research question (Which positive emotions are most salient in the experience of leisure travel?). Bringing the findings on the four research questions together also extends understanding of the language used by mature adults to describe positive emotions in friendship contexts, and the measurement of quality of life.

Manuscript 1 revealed processes that fostered the positive emotions of amusement, interest, warmth (which included specific experiences of joy and contentment), and awe. Manuscript 2 featured models to not only predict the development of positive emotions overall (the mean of all ten positive emotions in the modified Differential Emotions Scale; Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009) but also the development of each of four well-theorized positive emotions, love, interest, joy, and contentment. I chose to pursue these four specific positive emotions based on established descriptions of how they foster valued long-term outcomes (Fredrickson, 1998). Interest, joy, and contentment showed substantial increases during leisure travel over and above the effects of weekends, while love did not. Collectively, these findings suggest that positive emotions fostered by leisure travel experiences include joy, interest, contentment, amusement, and awe, and that the increases in these positive emotions are at least partly due to processes arising from the social contexts of leisure travel. While all five of these emotions are present in state-of-the-art emotion measures (e.g., mDES, Cohn et al., 2009), the outcomes of amusement and awe are not as well understood as joy, interest, and contentment.

Amusement and awe are not well-theorized in the positive psychology literature (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Therefore, I did not deem these emotions appropriate to analyze in Manuscript 2, as the deductive reasoning used in such an analysis requires established theory to test (Schutt, 2006). However, as Manuscript 1 reveals the importance of these positive emotions in the leisure travel experience, I added these two positive emotions to the graphs presented in Manuscript 2. As seen below, both amusement and awe followed the shape of joy, contentment, and positive emotions overall in increasing as leisure travel approached, peaking during leisure travel, and declining afterwards (Figure 4-2). As noted earlier, existing studies addressing positive emotions in leisure travel (e.g., Nawijn, 2009; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004b) did not examine specific positive emotions. The present findings contribute understanding of the importance and development of these six specific positive emotions to existing research.

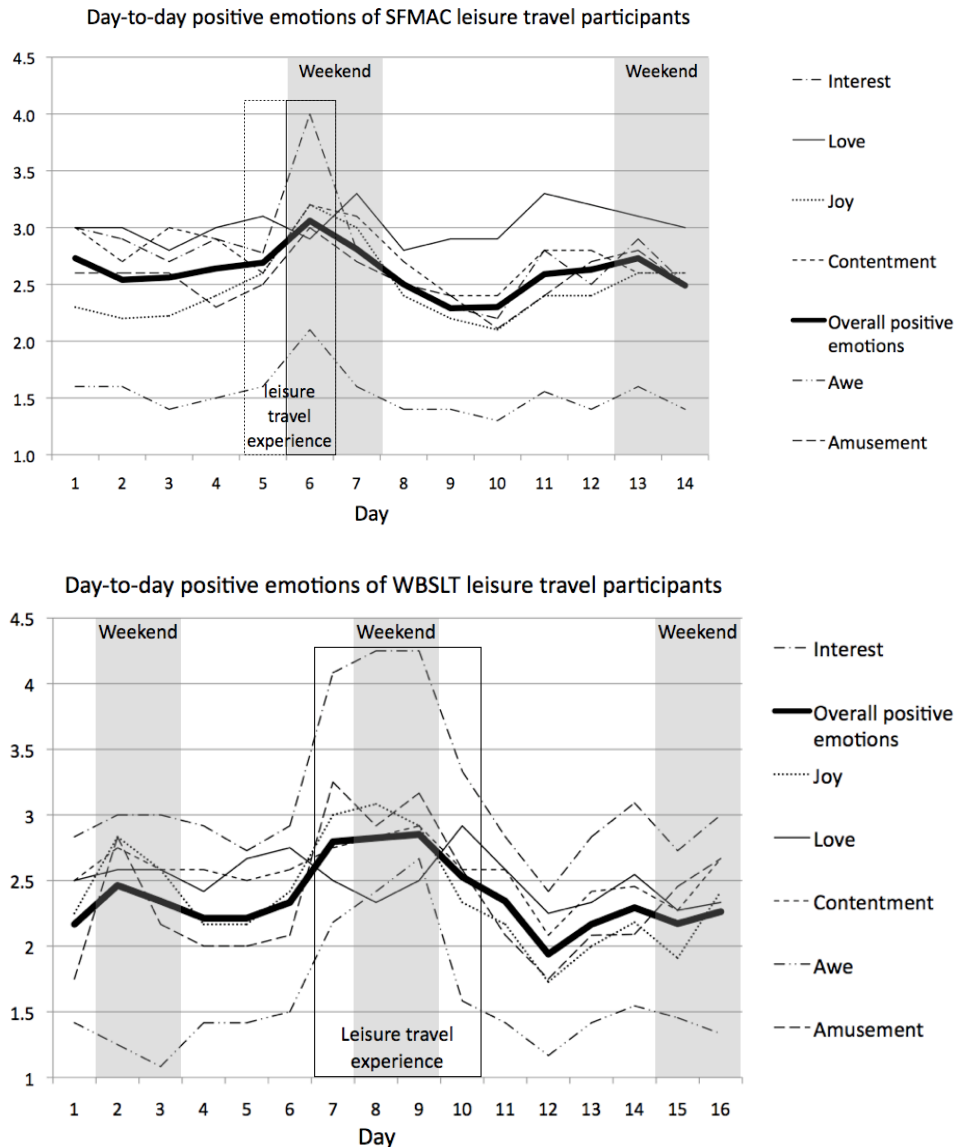


Figure 4-2: Positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel in WBSLT and SFMAC groups.

In Manuscript 1, I explained my decision to name positive emotions in the context of friendships *warmth* (containing, specifically, joy and contentment) instead of *love*, as Fredrickson (1998) suggests. The findings of Manuscript 2 bear this decision out, portraying joy and contentment, two emotions implicated in friendships in Manuscript 1, as elevated during the leisure travel experience. In contrast, the psychometric data on love shows no increase during the leisure travel experience. This finding confirms that participants do not define the word “love” as

capturing the positive emotions they feel when creating or rekindling friendships in the social context of leisure travel. Therefore, Fredrickson's (1998; 2009) use of the term *love* to signify positive emotions experienced in the context of relationships may not be congruent with the way mature adults talk about these emotions in friendship contexts.

An analysis of the fourth research question (Does leisure contribute to quality of life, and if so, are positive emotions the mechanism of that change?), which is not included in the manuscripts, suggests that psychometric self-report measures of quality of life do not show significant developmental change over a three-month period that includes leisure travel. The findings discussed in Manuscript 1, however, cast doubt on the conclusion that quality of life did not increase as a result of the studied experiences. Although quality of life implications of leisure travel were not the focus of Manuscript 1, some quality of life outcomes did emerge from the data. Human relationships in particular surfaced as important to participants. Growth in these relationships was a demonstrated consequence of the positive emotions experienced in the social context of each leisure travel experience. It is possible, then, that the established measures of quality of life used to address research question #4 (e.g., SWLS; Diener, Emmons, & Larsen, 1988) in the present study are inadequate to measure the contributions that leisure travel makes to quality of life. The development of new measures organically derived from participants' leisure travel experiences, such as those offered by Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu (2010), may fill this gap.

### **Implications for theory and practice**

#### **Theoretical implications**

The present study offers eight contributions to existing positive psychology and tourism research literatures. These contributions fill gaps created by the lack of cross-fertilization between tourism and positive psychology streams of research—ignorance of the positive emotions that



develop as a result of leisure travel, the processes that foster positive emotions, and the consequences of positive emotions in the leisure travel context for quality of life.

First of all, the present study found strong psychographic and ethnographic evidence that leisure travel boosts positive emotions. This finding confirms evidence from tourism research (e.g., Nawijn, 2009; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004) that leisure travel is a positive experience. More importantly, the finding that leisure travel boosts positive emotions suggests that positive psychologists need to consider leisure travel in their efforts to boost individuals' experiences of positive emotions over the long term (e.g., Fredrickson, 2009; Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Second, the present study found that the day-to-day development of positive emotions overall as well as joy and interest follows the peak model. The development of contentment does not follow the peak model, and love does not increase during the leisure travel experience. The findings provide support for the peak model of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Hammitt, 1980; Graburn, 2001) that, for the first time, is based on rigorous, specific, and daily measurement of positive emotions, and differentiates between distinct positive emotions. No previous studies supporting the peak model met such a rigorous standard for measurement of positive emotions, nor did they explore day-to-day development before, during, and after leisure travel. Furthermore, with the exception of Graburn's (2001) theoretical essay, no previous studies explored the development of specific positive emotions such as love, joy, interest, and contentment.

Third, I found that humor can be used to create positive emotions, not just relieve negative ones. Previous literature touching on humor in leisure travel contexts (e.g., Sharpe, 2002; Pearce, 2009) portrayed it as a method of stress relief or damage control for tour leaders and instructors. In the present study, I found that humor could be constructive as well.

Fourth, based on my participant observation and key informant conversations about the WBSLT in particular, I found that group norms contribute to positive emotions. This confirms tentative findings that group norms connect social contexts of leisure travel to positive emotions

(e.g., Sharpe, 2002; Yarnal, 2005). Furthermore, similar processes arose from the social context of the SFMAC, despite the fact that SFMAC leaders played far less of a role in creating or enforcing norms.

Fifth, I found that mature adults foster positive emotions not just by investing in existing close friendships, but by creating new ones as well. This finding is not consistent with socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen & Mikels, 2005; Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990), which suggests that mature adults eschew opportunities to build new relationships to invest resources into existing relationships. Participants in the present study did not exhibit such self-limitation, suggesting that socioemotional selectivity theory may not extend to leisure travel contexts as an explanation of mature adults' positive emotions.

Sixth, I found that specific activities relevant to participants engender the positive emotion of interest. This finding supports tentative previous evidence of interest in the social contexts of leisure travel (Foster, 1986), but suggests that interest is genuine, rather than motivated by social appearances, as in Foster's example. Furthermore, the finding suggests a difference between leisure travel not focused on specific activities, where observed positive emotions do not include interest (e.g., Lett, 1983; Yarnal, 2005) and leisure travel that does focus on specific activities, where observed positive emotions include interest (Foster, 1986).

Seventh, the present study found that reactions to loss involve deeply meaningful positive emotions. This finding introduces the important dimension of meaning (Fredrickson, 2000) to the study of positive emotions in leisure travel. While an existing study of travelers to a site similar to that of the WBSLT also reported meaningful reactions (Chronis, 2002), I unpacked these reactions according to emotional content and revealed the underlying process.

Finally, my results provide insufficient evidence to conclude that leisure travel increases quality of life, a finding that conflicts with existing studies linking leisure travel to quality of life (Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009). The finding suggests that measurement of quality of life in a leisure travel context warrants further investigation, especially before public and policy

recommendations regarding leisure travel are made. Furthermore, findings from Manuscript 1 raise the possibility that quality of life outcomes of leisure may be largely social. The medical disease focus of previous research linking leisure travel and quality of life (e.g., Eaker et al., 1992; Gump & Mathews, 2002) may, therefore, be missing the full picture of quality of life outcomes.

### **Implications for practice in leisure travel**

The present findings highlight the importance of positive emotions for the administration of leisure travel experiences. Specifically, the findings suggest that leisure travel marketers' promises of positive emotions from leisure travel experiences are attainable, and that four potential interventions may help leisure travel administrators infuse positive emotions into leisure travel experiences.

First, because positive emotions develop before the leisure travel experience begins and after it ends, leisure travel administrators should communicate with clients, possibly through partnerships with relevant businesses, to make the most of clients' positive anticipatory and recollective feelings toward their experience. Second, because group norms of humor are important to fostering positive emotions, leisure travel administrators should leverage existing customer loyalty models to form communities of repeat participants based on norms of positive, humorous, constructive interaction. Such norms proliferated throughout the studied experiences, increasing their value to participants and transforming emotionally ambiguous or challenging leisure travel (Nawijn, 2009) into a positive experience. Third, because activities relevant to participants inspired interest, leisure travel administrators should consider designing product offerings based on activities that may not appeal to broad market segments, but capture smaller groups of individuals passionate about such activities. The present findings suggest such groups deeply enjoy their leisure travel experiences and return year after year. Finally, because stories of

loss inspired sublime reactions in the studied experiences, leisure travel administrators should consider the stories of loss inherent to many leisure travel destinations as opportunities to deepen the meaning of participants' positive emotions. Likewise, the potential of experiences not associated with loss to inspire sublime reactions, such as the notion of sublime landscapes (Burke, 1909) should be explored.

### **Future directions for research of positive emotions and leisure travel**

The present findings provide a platform for further study of positive emotions and quality of life outcomes of leisure travel. The findings of the present study warrant replication and extension to other populations as well as other types of leisure travel experiences. While the peak model has provisionally been upheld in health tourism (e.g., Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004) and nature-based tourism (e.g., Hammitt, 1980; More & Payne, 1978) contexts, the tremendous breadth of tourism experiences offers rich possibilities for further inquiry. Similarly, although a number of Western cultures have been featured in studies supporting the peak model (e.g., university students in the United States, Hammitt, 1980; general population in Netherlands, Nawijn, 2009; mature adults in Austria, Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004), the effects of culture of origin on leisure travelers' positive emotions await exploration. Furthermore, leisure travelers in other cultures may use different words to organize and express positive emotions and quality of life. More generally, individual differences between leisure travelers such as personality, gender, marital status, retirement status, and age could be explored in similar studies with larger samples, which afford greater statistical power to detect between-individual differences (Schutt, 2006).

The interpretive microethnographic portion of the study fruitfully enriched the findings of the present study regarding positive emotions during the leisure travel experience. Due to logistical limitations, emotions before and after leisure travel experiences were only considered in the psychometric portion of the study. Therefore, future research should bring interpretive

ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, or autoethnography to bear on the issue of positive emotion development before and after leisure travel. The developmental psychometric portion of the present study suggests that positive emotions increase before leisure travel and decrease after. To delve beneath the surface of this finding and determine what processes undergird these developmental patterns could complete the picture sketched out by the present study concerning the development of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. Additionally, the developmental role of affective forecasting and recollection, the mismatch between people's predictions and memories of their positive emotions and their actual positive emotional experiences (Gilbert, 2006; Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003), warrants further study.

After articulating the peak model as a way to unpack the "secular ritual" of leisure travel (p. 45), Graburn (2001) suggests an interesting twist to the peak model that originates from Feyerabend's (1979) study of reverse culture shock. Feyerabend found that reverse culture shock, a period following leisure travel marked by negative emotions, lasts half as long as the leisure travel experience itself. A more complex model based on the peak model, but including a period of reverse culture shock, could elaborate our understanding of positive emotions before, during, and after leisure travel. Such an analysis was not possible with the present data because some SFMAC participants only experienced leisure travel for a single day. With slightly longer experiences, testing whether a decline in positive emotions (or merely an increase in negative emotions, or neither) immediately follows leisure travel would be possible.

The importance of processes arising from leisure travelers' social contexts suggests the possibility of applying promising developments in social network theory (e.g., Lazer et al., 2009; Smith & Christakis, 2008), in turn based on studies of small group culture (e.g., Roberts, 1951), to leisure travel contexts. Social network theory has revealed the impacts of group processes on individual behavior. If applied to leisure travel contexts, social network theory could further extend understanding of leisure travel management to maximize participants' positive emotions.

While the present study focused on the constructive power of positive emotions, negative emotions have historically been of greater interest to social psychologists (Fredrickson, 1998) and warrant attention as well. Recent studies by Harmon-Jones and colleagues (Harmon-Jones & Gable, 2009; Harmon-Jones, Lueck, Fearn, & Harmon-Jones, 2006) have shown that the cognitive broadening implicated in quality of life outcomes by Fredrickson (1998) may, under select conditions, result from some negative as well as positive emotions. Therefore, the downstream effects of potentially broadening negative emotions are also worth investigating.

Finally, more exploration of the quality of life implications of leisure travel is needed. The present study did not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that leisure travel boosts quality of life. Future research should determine if this inconsistency with other research linking tourism to quality of life (see Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009) is due to characteristics of the trip experience or due to measurement limitations. Indeed, the present study suggests that the quality of life outcomes of leisure travel may be largely social, a kind of outcome that existing global or medical measures of quality of life do not address. Such measures need, at a minimum, to be complemented with measures of psychological processes that precede and follow social interactions. Also, studies of quality of life in leisure contexts have benefited from a more sociological perspective (e.g., Yarnal, Chick, & Kerstetter, 2008). Therefore, a more interpretive, inductive inquiry into quality of life outcomes of leisure travel, if any, could be especially productive.

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## Appendix A

### Personality and Demographic Questionnaire Items

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

	disagree strongly	disagree moderately	disagree a little	neither agree nor disagree	agree a little	agree moderately	agree strongly
extraverted, enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
reserved, quiet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
calm, emotionally stable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
anxious, easily upset	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
disorganized, careless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
dependable, self- disciplined	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
critical, quarrelsome	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
open to new experiences, complex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
sympathetic, warm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
conventional, uncreative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Last few questions: please tell us a little bit about yourself.

What is your current employment status?

**Working full-time**

**Retired**

**Unemployed**

**Working part-time**

What is your marital status?

**Living with partner**

**Divorced**

**Widowed**

**Single**

**Married**

**Separated**

What is your highest completed level of education?

**Primary school**

**High School**

**Some college**

**College or university 4-year degree**

**Some graduate school**

**Master's degree**

**Professional degree**

**PhD or doctorate degree**

What is your age in years?

\_\_\_\_\_

*(author's note: age categories were provided in the questionnaire sent to the WBSLT upon tour director's request)*

## Appendix B

### Quality of Life Questionnaire Items

Below are several statements you may agree or disagree with. Please indicate your agreement with each of these statements by circling the appropriate number on the 7-point scale.

	strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The conditions of my life are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am satisfied with my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following two questions ask how you feel about your quality of life and health.

If you are unsure about which response to give to a question, please choose the one that appears most appropriate. This can often be your first response.

We ask you to think about your life in the **last two weeks**.

	very poor	poor	neither poor nor good	good	very good
How would you rate your quality of life?	1	2	3	4	5
	very dissatisfied	dissatisfied	neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	satisfied	very satisfied
How satisfied are you with your health?	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix C

## Daily Emotion Questionnaire Items

Please rate your **strongest experience** of each emotion **today**. Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/09

	very slight or none at all	little	moderate	quite a bit	extreme
interested	1	2	3	4	5
surprised	1	2	3	4	5
ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
amused	1	2	3	4	5
loving	1	2	3	4	5
contemptuous	1	2	3	4	5
embarrassed	1	2	3	4	5
proud	1	2	3	4	5
joyous	1	2	3	4	5
guilty	1	2	3	4	5
grateful	1	2	3	4	5
angry	1	2	3	4	5
hopeful	1	2	3	4	5
sad	1	2	3	4	5
afraid	1	2	3	4	5
disgusted	1	2	3	4	5
content	1	2	3	4	5
awed	1	2	3	4	5
compassionate	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix D

### IRB Acceptance Letter

From: Laura S. Young, Compliance Coordinator  
To: Ondrej Mitas  
Subject: Results of Review of Proposal - Expedited (**IRB #30980**)  
**Approval Expiration Date: May 20, 2010**  
“Quality of Life and the Battlefield Study Tour”

The Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for use of human participants in your research. By accepting this decision, you agree to obtain prior approval from the IRB for any changes to your study. Unanticipated participant events that are encountered during the conduct of this research must be reported in a timely fashion.

**Enclosed is the dated, IRB-approved informed consent form to be used when recruiting participants for this research.** Participants must receive a **copy** of the approved informed consent form to keep for their records.

**If signed consent is obtained, the principal investigator is expected to maintain the original signed consent forms along with the IRB research records for this research at least three (3) years after termination of IRB approval. For projects that involve protected health information (PHI) and are regulated by HIPAA, records are to be maintained for six (6) years. The principal investigator must determine and adhere to additional requirements established by the FDA and any outside sponsors.**

**If this study will extend beyond the above noted approval expiration date, the principal investigator must submit a completed Continuing Progress Report to the Office for Research Protections (ORP) to request renewed approval for this research.**

On behalf of the IRB and the University, thank you for your efforts to conduct your research in compliance with the federal regulations that have been established for the protection of human participants.

**Appendix E**  
**Consent Forms**



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**Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research**  
The Pennsylvania State University

**Title of Project:** Quality of Life and Leisure Travel

**Principal Investigator:** Ondrej Mitas  
814 Ford Bldg  
University Park, PA 16802  
814-221-6895  
ondrejmitas@gmail.com

**Advisor:** Dr. Careen Yarnal  
812 Ford Bldg  
University Park, PA 16802  
814-863-5559  
cmy122@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to determine if and how leisure travel contributes to quality of life.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** During the 2009 Kudzu Fall contest, you may be observed. The principal investigator (Ondrej) will participate in the contest as an observer and may occasionally take notes on individual behavior. He will write down brief notes, excluding identifying or compromising information, about people's feelings, behaviors, and interactions. Also, if you choose, you may fill out three **optional**, short online questionnaires – one **now**, one **about a week after** the 2009 Kudzu Fall contest, and one **three weeks after** the contest. Some of the items may seem unusual, but they come from previous quality of life research by the World Health Organization and psychology professors at U.S. universities. You will also be asked to fill out an **optional**, very short questionnaire daily for ten days in a booklet that will be sent to you now. If you choose to continue your participation, I will send you another booklet at the beginning of September to fill out daily for twenty days before, during, and after the 2009 Kudzu Fall contest.
3. **Discomforts and Risks:** You may experience some discomfort due to knowing that I will be observing you. Otherwise, there are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.
4. **Benefits:** The benefits to you and to society include understanding how leisure travel such as the 2009 Kudzu Fall contest contributes to quality of life in older adults.
5. **Duration/Time:** Being observed will not require any additional time from you. Each optional online questionnaire (of 3) will take between 5 and 10 minutes. Each daily questionnaire (of 30) in the booklets will take less than 2 minutes. Therefore, your participation in the study could take a total maximum of one hour and 30 minutes.
6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. If you fill out the optional questionnaires and booklets, I ask for you to provide your name and address so that I can 1) send you the remaining questionnaires *in this study only*, and 2) link your responses to each questionnaire with your responses to other questionnaires in this research study. Once I have entered your data, your name and address will be discarded and not used further. I will not report any individual data. Penn State's Office for

Page 2 of 2

Research Protections, the Social Science Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this research study. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name will not be linked to your responses after data collection is over.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Ondrej Mitas at (814) 221-6895 or [ondrejmitas@gmail.com](mailto:ondrejmitas@gmail.com) with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. Please contact the Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775 with questions, complaints or concerns about your rights as a research participant, if you feel this study has harmed you, or if you would like to offer input. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. All questions about research procedures can only be answered by the principal investigator.”
8. **Payment for participation:** You can be paid \$5 for each complete online questionnaire, and \$5 for each complete daily booklet. I consider an online questionnaire or booklet page **not** complete if more than 5 items are left unanswered. You can earn up to \$30 for participating in this study.
10. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Completion and return of the questionnaires implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research.

Please print this form for your records or future reference.

**ORP OFFICE USE ONLY – DO NOT REMOVE OR MODIFY: This informed consent form (Doc.#2) was reviewed and approved by the Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB#30980) at The Pennsylvania State University on 07-06-09. It will expire on 05-20-10. (DWM)**

Page 1 of 2

**Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research**  
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**Principal Investigator:** Ondrej Mitas  
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**Advisor:** Dr. Careen Yarnal  
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University Park, PA 16802  
814-863-5559  
cmy122@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to determine if and how leisure travel contributes to quality of life.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** During the tour, you may be observed. The principal investigator will participate in the tour as an observer and may occasionally take notes on individual behavior. He will write down brief notes, excluding identifying or compromising information, about people's feelings, behaviors, and interactions. Also, if you choose, you may fill out three **optional**, short online questionnaires – one **now**, one **about a week after** the Battlefield Study Tour, and one **three weeks after** the Battlefield Study Tour. Some of the items may seem unusual, but they come from previous quality of life research by the World Health Organization and psychology professors at U.S. universities. You will also be asked to fill out an **optional**, very short questionnaire daily for ten days in a booklet that will be sent to you now. If you choose to continue your participation, I will send you another optional booklet at the beginning of September to fill out daily for twenty days before, during, and after the Battlefield Study Tour.
3. **Discomforts and Risks:** You may experience some discomfort due to knowing that I will be observing you. Otherwise, there are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.
4. **Benefits:** The benefits to you and to society include understanding how leisure travel such as the Battlefield Study Tour contributes to quality of life in older adults.
5. **Duration/Time:** Being observed will not require any additional time from you. Each optional online questionnaire (of 3) will take between 5 and 10 minutes. Each daily questionnaire (of 30) in the booklets will take less than 2 minutes. Therefore, your participation in the study could take a total maximum of one hour and 30 minutes.
6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. If you fill out the optional questionnaires and booklets, I ask for you to provide your name and address so that I can 1) send you the remaining questionnaires *in this study only*, and 2) link your responses to each questionnaire with your responses to other questionnaires in this research study. Once I have entered your data, your name and address will be discarded and not used further. I will not report any individual data. Penn State's Office for

Page 2 of 2

Research Protections, the Social Science Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this research study. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name will not be linked to your responses after data collection is over.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Ondrej Mitas at (814) 221-6895 or [ondrejmitas@gmail.com](mailto:ondrejmitas@gmail.com) with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. Please contact the Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775 with questions, complaints or concerns about your rights as a research participant, if you feel this study has harmed you, or if you would like to offer input. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. All questions about research procedures can only be answered by the principal investigator.”
8. **Payment for participation:** You can be paid \$5 for each complete online questionnaire, and \$5 for each complete daily booklet. I consider an online questionnaire or booklet page **not** complete if more than 5 items are left unanswered. You can earn up to \$30 for participating in this study.
10. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Completion and return of the questionnaires implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research.

Please print this form for your records or future reference.

**ORP OFFICE USE ONLY – DO NOT REMOVE OR MODIFY: This informed consent form (Doc.#2) was reviewed and approved by the Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB#30980) at The Pennsylvania State University on 07-06-09. It will expire on 05-20-10. (DWM)**

## Appendix F

### Abstract For Future Article

Appendix F is an abstract of an independent manuscript to be developed within one year from completion of this dissertation. The manuscript addresses the issue of positive emotions' role in quality of life changes associated with the War Between the States Learning Tour (WBSLT) and Sandhills Freeflight Model Airplane Contest (SFMAC). In contrast to the dissertation, which examines these experiences as leisure travel, the manuscript views the WBSLT and SFMAC through the perspective of serious and casual leisure (Stebbins, 2006). This manuscript will be submitted to the peer-reviewed leisure research journal *Leisure/Loisir*.

#### **Casually fun, seriously happy: Valuable outcomes follow positive emotions in leisure**

The serious leisure-casual leisure framework (Stebbins, 1982, 1997) has been used to understand the valuable outcomes of leisure. This framework draws a contrast between casual leisure, which allegedly produces short-term gratification (Stebbins, 1997), and serious leisure, which is often challenging or even frustrating in the short term (Goff, Fick, & Oppliger, 1997) but is construed to foster valuable long-term benefits. Previous studies have supported the connections between serious leisure behaviors and long-term benefits (e.g., Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2002) well as connections between casual leisure and short-term benefits (e.g., Hutchinson & Kleiber, 2005).

However, a recent study of the Red Hat Society®, a social leisure group for older women, revealed overlap between short-term outcomes associated with casual leisure and long-term outcomes associated with serious leisure in a single leisure context (Shen & Yarnal, 2010). Links between short-term and long-term outcomes under a serious/casual leisure framework were also found in a study of volunteer campus guides (Qian & Yarnal, 2010). These findings raise the

intriguing possibility that valuable short-term and long-term outcomes may be connected.

Because these outcomes occur over different time scales, however, this connection has not been made in existing leisure research.

Social psychologists have proposed connections between desirable short-term outcomes (e.g., positive emotions, Fredrickson, 1998; social interaction, Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999) and valuable long-term outcomes (e.g., resilience, Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009; life satisfaction, Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008). Positive emotions, in particular, are desirable short-term psychological states with demonstrated links to long-term outcomes such as health and life satisfaction (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). The psychological processes that generate valued long-term outcomes from positive emotions (e.g., broadening and building, Fredrickson, 1998; socioemotional selectivity, Carstensen et al., 1999) have rarely been studied in leisure contexts, despite the fact that positive emotions are associated with leisure (e.g., Kleiber, Larson, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Mitas, Qian, & Yarnal, 2007).

The purpose of the present study was to explain *how* short-term outcomes typical of casual leisure link to long-term outcomes typical of serious leisure in the context of two mature adult leisure experiences. The study focuses on positive emotions as short-term outcomes because increasing recent attention to positive emotions in social psychology (e.g., Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson et al., 2008) has created a strong conceptual foundation for understanding experiences associated with leisure, and casual leisure in particular, such as fun and pleasure. The study also examines other short-term outcomes (e.g., creativity, recreation) and long-term outcomes (e.g., physical, social, and psychological resources) under an inclusive framework of quality of life of outcomes (Spiers & Walker, 2009).

The two study contexts included a group of 80 mature adults touring a Civil War battlefield and a group of 22 mature adults competing in a model aviation contest. These activities feature behaviors of overcoming challenge and application of unique skill that are characteristic

of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982) as well as behaviors of socializing, self gratification, and passive observation (Stebbins, 1997) that are characteristic of casual leisure.

The present study examines the short-term and long-term outcomes of these experiences under an interpretive ethnographic framework using participant observation and conversations with key informants. Using detailed fieldnotes before, during, and after each experience, noting evidence of my own as well as participants' behaviors and outcomes, I analyzed evidence under an interpretive thematic coding framework. For purposes of methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2007), themes generated from analysis of interpretive were compared with psychometric evidence of positive emotions and quality of life outcomes collected from a subset of participants.

Outcomes observed in the studied experiences demonstrated characteristics of serious leisure as well as casual leisure. Short-term outcomes were abundant, taking specific positive emotional forms, such as interest, joy, amusement, and awe. Valued short-term outcomes extended beyond positive emotions to include expression of creativity and novelty. Participants emphasized that these short-lived positive states were different from their experiences of day-to-day life. Interest, a positive emotion, was a particularly salient and important short-term outcome. Engaging in activities fostered multiple orientations of interest. Participants felt interest in fellow participants, in activity, and in recollection and anticipation of other leisure experiences.

These short-term outcomes had substantial long-term effects. Expressions of positive emotions, creativity, and novelty (e.g., laughter, engaged conversation) in interpersonal interactions facilitated friendship-building that, in turn, formed the foundation of valuable long-term social outcomes. Long-term outcomes were primarily of a social nature and included shared knowledge, enduring friendships, mentoring in activities (e.g., study of Civil War history, model airplane construction), and social support.

These findings confirm that the division of short-term and long-term outcomes of leisure experiences along the lines of serious and casual leisure is of limited usefulness (Shen & Yarnal,

2010). Short-term and long-term outcomes were interconnected in both experiences studied. Short-term and long-term outcomes are not distinguishable by association to specific leisure activities, as Stebbins (1982, 1997) has suggested. Furthermore, the findings suggest that short-term outcomes associated with casual leisure engender long-term outcomes associated with serious leisure by a process of relationship building. This process demonstrates the importance of leisure and of interpersonal interactions, variables rarely considered by social psychologists, to theories that link short-term and long-term outcomes (e.g., broaden-and-build, Fredrickson, 1998). The importance of interpersonal interactions, in particular, surfaced in long-term outcomes of leisure volunteering documented by Qian and Yarnal (2010).

Findings regarding specific short-term outcomes also extend existing research. Positive emotions were a frequent, rich, and varied aspect of desirable short-term outcomes in the studied experiences. The positive emotion of interest, in particular, was key. Fredrickson (1998) conceives interest as an emotion that prompts exploration, but participants' interest prompted a greater variety of behaviors here. Amusement was also a key positive emotion in constructing relationships, but is lacking from both serious/casual leisure and positive psychology literatures.

The present findings show that leisure experiences can be rich with desirable short-term outcomes, such as the positive emotion of interest, which facilitate the accumulation of positive long-term outcomes. Hence, long-term outcomes and short-term outcomes were not separate, but closely coupled by social processes. Therefore, the serious leisure-casual leisure distinction may not be optimal to advocate or advise for certain kinds of leisure based on valuable outcomes. In contrast, a notion of "tailoring" leisure experiences to the depth of engagement participants desire may be a more viable framework for managing leisure to maximize quality of life outcomes. Future research could examine the impacts of novel engagement (e.g, starting a new activity; moving through the recreation specialization process, Bryan, 1977) in leisure activities on valuable outcomes.



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- Stebbins, R. A. (1997). Casual leisure: A conceptual statement. *Leisure Studies*, 16, 17–25.

## VITA

**Ondrej Mitas** (born 1982, Bratislava, Czechoslovakia)

### Education

- M.S. in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management  
North Carolina State University (2006).  
B.A. Summa Cum Laude in Arts Applications (Minor in Computer Programming)  
North Carolina State University (2004).  
Ph.D. in Leisure Studies (Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management)  
The Pennsylvania State University (projected graduation Summer 2010).

### Teaching

- Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence Course in College Teaching (Spring 2009).  
RPTM 120 Leisure and Human Behavior (Summer 2009, Summer 2008, with Xinyi Lisa Qian,  
several guest lectures Spring 2006 - Spring 2009).  
RPTM 433W Program Evaluation & Research Methods (Fall 2008, Spring 2009).  
Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence Course in College Teaching (Assistant Fall 2009).  
RPTM 433W Program Evaluation & Research Methods (Assistant Fall 2007, Spring 2008).  
RPTM 277 Recreation for People With Disabilities (Assistant Spring 2008).  
RPTM 356 Programming in Recreation and Leisure Services (Assistant Fall 2007).

### Peer-Reviewed Publications

- Mitas, O., & Mitasova, H. (2007). A model for cartography's role in managing the park visitor experience. *Kartograficke Listy (Cartographic Letters)*.  
Mitas, O., Qian, X., Yarnal, C., & Kerstetter, D. (2011). "The fun begins now!": Broadening and Building Processes in Red Hat Society® Participation. Submitted to *Journal of Leisure Research*.

### Refereed conference presentations

- Mitas, O., Qian, X., Yarnal, C., & Adams, R. B. (forthcoming October 2009). Young adult playfulness and life satisfaction: An exploratory study of potential mediators. National Recreation and Park Association, Salt Lake City, UT, USA.  
Mitas, O., Qian, X., & Yarnal, C. (2008). "Now, I'm smiling": Women in the Red Hat Society broaden and build. National Recreation and Park Association, Baltimore, MD, USA.  
Mitas, O., Qian, X., & Yarnal, C. (2007). "I've got my joy back": Positive emotions in older womens' leisure. Canadian Congress of Leisure Research, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.  
Mitas, O., & Kokkinou, A. (2007). A conceptual model of tourism facilitated by low-cost airlines. International Conference on Tourism, Athens, Greece.  
Mitas, O. & Yarnal, C. M. (2007). A visual analysis of the tourist gaze in European cities. 6th International Symposium on Aspects of Tourism, Eastbourne, UK.  
Mitas, O. & Mohan, L. (2005). Updates and improvements at North Carolina's Travel Tracker. Southeast Travel & Tourism Research Association Meeting, Biloxi, MS, USA.

### Posters

- Mitas, O., Brothers, G., & Henderson, K. A. (2006). The Visitor Experience at Jockey's Ridge. Travel and Tourism Research Association 2006 Conference, Dublin, Ireland.  
Mitas, O., Mitasova, H., Overton, M., & Harmon, R. (2005). Geospatial analysis of dynamic geomorphological features and their management: Jockey's Ridge, North Carolina, United States Atlantic Coast. GIS Planet Conference Estoril, Portugal.  
Trinks, M., Mitas, O., & Page, J. (2005). Use levels and user activities and motivations at an off-leash dog park. Southeast Recreation Research Conference, Wilmington, North Carolina.