

Positive emotions and passionate leisure involvement

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Abstract:

Music is commonly linked to moments of remembrance, joy, celebration and bonding. This paper explores how middle-aged participants in a music scene use the various aspects of their involvement to create and store positive emotions cultivated through music appreciation, friendship building and maintenance, and shared moments of ecstasy and catharsis. Due to the prevalence of significant life events and transitions in this age cohort (relationship, career and health changes), isolating how people use their involvement in leisure activities can be integral to learning how people build and maintain a high quality of life, as well as how they draw on those positive associations to cope with potential hardships that may arise.

Keywords: positive psychology | music | fan culture | ethnography | leisure

Article:

28 June 2014, Dixie Mattress Festival1 (DMF), Tidewater, Oregon: It had been raining mostly nonstop since before the festival began yesterday; not exactly ideal for an outdoor concert series. Today, though, the rain was more intermittent; it seemed as if nature was testing our dedication. I had made plans to sit down with Jack, Arlo and Tracy to conduct our interviews that day, and though I hadn't planned on a focus group, that is what I got.² Huddled under their rain tarp with the three interviewees, word had really spread about my research in relation to the band and its fans. Just as we were getting ready to have our chat, five or so others found their way to the shelter of the blue tarp and pulled up seats, all seemingly awaiting a performance. I was at one end of the gathering, with everyone else forming a 'U' around me. As I clicked on the recorder, those there out of curiosity wound down their conversations and turned their focus to me; then we jumped into the interview. At the conclusion of the nearly three-hour long interview, I left the festival grounds for a few hours and returned just before Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons were to go on. As soon as I walked into the periphery of the venue, Catie ran up to me smiling, and grabbed my arm, directing me on a walk back to the campground. She said to me, 'It was so awesome watching you conduct your interviews. It was like church. You were leading the discussion about this thing that is so important to each and every one of us. You were so welcoming to those of us who wanted to watch and listen, and hear what our dear friends have to say about this band. I really feel as if we all shared a special moment there. Thank you.'

Introduction

The learning process about our personal interests is typically a lifelong undertaking. As we age and develop, both cognitively and emotionally, we are continuously exposed to new activities, social outlets and objects of potential attraction (or lack thereof). There is an infinite amount of possible endeavours and interactions for us to undertake, and it is often through trial and error or sheer luck that we navigate towards the objects of greatest affection. And in the event where we are fortunate enough to find something that is meaningful, it follows that we would likely want to increase our involvement in that leisure outlet (Kashdan and Silvia 2011). And when we engage in activities that allow us to feel good about ourselves and generate positive emotions, it will undeniably affect our sense of self and our level of esteem (Hewitt 2011). When our level of self-esteem rises through our participation in leisure that consistently provides opportunities for self-verification resulting in positive emotional outcomes, it is probable that our hope for future happiness will increase as well (Rand and Cheavens 2011).

Lloyd and Auld (2002) said that the objective measure of leisure (e.g. attending concerts with close friends) is one of the top predictors of quality of life (QOL). Immersion in passionate leisure consumption serves to help people assimilate into social networks that are rich grounds to create meaning and share identity (McCormick and McGuire 1996). Further, leisure possesses the potential to provide a safe space for exploration of the self and the desired trajectory of one's life (Schmidt and Little 2007). Fredrickson (2003), a pioneering figure in positive psychology, said that people who regularly feel positive emotions go on an 'upward spiral' of continued growth and flourishing, and that this expansion of positive emotions and growth into all sectors of life can greatly diminish the hold negative emotions have on the mind and body (335).

For countless people, the discovery of music, whether it is a favourite genre or a specific band, is integral to their QOL because it provides opportunities for the fan to engage in an environment where they feel most like themselves (DeNora 2000), be it at a concert or in the confines of their home. For many, the attraction to music begins early in one's youth (Clay 2003; Hakanen 1995), and is essential to their developmental process, both emotionally and socially (Laiho 2004; Ruud 1997a). For some fans, this attraction to music that developed in their youth continues to be meaningful for them as they grow older, specifically as it relates to the music's ability to positively affect their attitude, identity and outlook on life (Bennett 2006; DeNora 1995; Kotarba 2005; Lewis 1983). However, the specific focus of the majority of research to date has been the role of music involvement within youth and adolescent age brackets (Arnett 1995; Bennett 2008; Clay 2003; Epstein 1994; Frith 1981; Gellel 2013; Hakanen 1995; Laiho 2004; Larson 1995; Rentfrow, McDonald, and Oldfellow 2009; Saarikallio and Erkkilä 2007; Schwartz and Fouts 2003; Selfhout et al. 2009), with far less research having been conducted on adult music fans, especially between 30 and 60 years old. Outside of a few notable scholars' efforts (Bennett 2006, 2013; Davis, 2006; Kotarba 2002, 2005; Taylor 2010), the literature investigating the use and impact of music on people's lives is particularly void of work documenting its role in middle-aged audiences. This stage of the life cycle is particularly important given the potential occurrence of a number of significant life events (e.g. career development, marriage, family, oftentimes illness and retirement). Of the research that has been conducted on adult audiences, Bennett (2006) and Davis' (2006) treatments are specific to the punk genre, Kotarba (2002, 2005) focuses on the baby boomer generation and Taylor's (2010) account comprises the role of ageing 'queers' and their relation to music, leaving a wide breadth of music scenes untouched in terms of scholarly research on the impacts of music on QOL,

maintenance and expression of identity and positive emotions in middle-aged audiences. More recently, however, Bennett (2013) and Hodkinson and Bennett's (2012) edited volume have addressed a broader spectrum of ageing music fans, thus signalling the importance of further exploration in this area.

In the study on which this paper is based, we explored the role of music in the lives of the fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons, an internationally established jam band with great critical acclaim, but a rather small following of devoted fans. Joseph's music is largely drawn from his life and personal experiences, and the lyrical content includes social commentary, the hardships of substance abuse and religious themes (both in praise and blasphemy) to name just a few of the topics he covers. The fans of the band are a predominately older audience when compared to other bands within their genre. This appears to be so because the Jackmormons are often discovered through a more well-established and affiliated band, Widespread Panic. The majority of the individuals we spoke with spent over a decade involved with Widespread Panic, and then eventually found the Jackmormons at an older age. In addition to finding Joseph's music more to their liking, other aspects signalled their evolution of fandom from one band to the other. Because the Jackmormons' music scene was so much smaller, it was easier to create and maintain meaningful friendships. Additionally, because the fan base of the Jackmormons is an older crowd (average age of interview participants was 42), the interviewees felt that there was a more mature appreciation of the music, and each other in general, as opposed to the oftentimes more rambunctious scene associated with Widespread Panic. A significant number of the band's most dedicated fans fall in an age range from 30 to 60 years old, thus making them a worthwhile cohort for examining the phenomenon of passionate music fans and positive emotion retention in the midlife age bracket. The primary research question guiding this paper was how do positive emotions generated from participation in the Jackmormons' music scene affect QOL outside the concert setting?

The objective of this study was to examine how the fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons use the music scene as a place to make and maintain friendships, as well as to highlight the prominence of the band's music in their personal lives in affecting QOL within, and beyond the concert setting. This paper draws from the work of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) in the area of positive psychology, and specifically the broaden-and-build theory as developed by Fredrickson (2001) which states that positive emotions broaden the thought-action repertoires of people leading to a store of enduring positive resources for future benefit. This paper will demonstrate how fans create stores of positive energy through their involvement that allow them to lead higher quality lives outside of the concert experience. In the instances where fans have negative outcomes associated with their involvement (e.g. alcohol and/or drug abuse), the paper will display how those adversely affected rely on the friendships made within the music scene, and the music itself, to cope with the negative ramifications of their involvement.

Theoretical framework

When examining participation in any leisure activity that is pursued with a high level of passion, we often look at the benefits that are derived from one's involvement. What is it about the activity that brings one back? What do people receive from their participation? Because Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory looks at the takeaway of involvement and how positive stores of emotion are accrued and possess the potential to counteract negative feelings or

situations, it makes sense to look at the concept in conjunction with the construct of enduring leisure involvement.

In the enduring involvement literature, involvement primarily focuses on participants' emotional attachment to leisure activities (Kyle and Chick 2002). Along with this is the role of commitment, which includes the subjective and behavioural components that help form consistent leisure patterns. Consistent leisure behaviour, in many cases, is maintained because of others who are involved in the same activity (Kyle and Chick 2004), thus making the connection to the phenomenon stronger. Because both enduring leisure involvement and positive psychology consider the accumulated effects of participation, interaction and meaning making, it follows that linking the two concepts could allow for a better understanding of long-term implications of involvement in a leisure activity, in this case participation in a music scene.

Positive psychology

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) stated that positive psychology is about valued subjective experiences that involve all periods of the life timeline. Positive psychology focuses on the study of well-being and satisfaction from past experiences, hope and optimism for future experiences, and a sense of happiness for experiences in the present. Writing about eudaimonic experiences (living in accordance with one's perception of their true self), Waterman (1993) suggested that these experiences of subjective individual potential are most powerful when one is engaged in the activities that allow them to feel alive and authentic, a sense that gives rise to a feeling of 'existing as who they really are' (679). Carruthers and Hood (2004) said that these experiences of authenticity can lead to the good life when one becomes completely absorbed in them. People can then find meaning through the pursuit of their most important ambitions, leading to the ability to 'comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives' (Steger 2011, 682).

It is this positive emotional capital that one builds through their personal engagement in passionate activities and interactions with meaningful others that Fredrickson (2001) spoke of when she developed her broaden-and-build theory. Fredrickson (2001) said that positive emotions broaden an individual's momentary frame of mind, and by doing so, help to generate a store of enduring personal resources. She posited that engaging in activities that yield positive emotions has the potential to undo negative emotions, and that even though the positive emotions are often short-lived, they possess the ability to have 'deep and enduring effects' (333). Further, when an individual's experiences of positive emotions occur in union with others, there is not only an instance of mutual enjoyment, but also the creation of 'enduring alliances' that become further resources for individuals to draw on in times of need (Fredrickson 1998, 311). Engagement in positive experiences in the present, individually or with others, allows people to 'sample the rewards of the future' now (Cohn and Fredrickson 2011, 21).

Music can then be a significant source of the authenticity that Waterman (1993) spoke of, in that the discovery of meaningful music can help individuals build personal narratives of their identity through feelings of what life should be like (Ruud 1997b). Music can also be pivotal in building important relationships with compatible others (Lonsdale and North 2009), and following Fredrickson (2001), allow for the construction of interpersonal and intrapersonal resources for future benefit (Saarikallio and Erkkilä 2007). It is then that we see the characteristics of music appreciation interpreted and used as methods of coping with life (Schäfer and Sedlmeier 2009). This coping does not necessarily imply that the affective power of

music can only be used in times of melancholy or grief, but rather these stores of positive energy gained from one's appreciation and involvement in music can act as a bridge to building and strengthening other relationships (Fredrickson 2001).

When one is further able to address the ever-present and ambiguous conditions of life, it can allow positive energy and expectations to take hold and add to our ability to maintain an optimistic outlook (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Music, as a significant form of leisure, offers the opportunity to 'explore not only what one does, but who one is' (Schmidt and Little 2007, 225). And when done in tandem with likeminded fans, music fulfils social-psychological needs such as being together, supporting one another, experiencing catharsis and providing a safe outlet for release (Taylor and Taylor 1997).

Subjective well-being and QOL

When Diener (1984) first began writing about subjective well-being (SWB), following Coan (1977), he stated that there were three categories in which well-being and happiness could be grouped. The first was defined by external criteria such as virtue, and was described as a normative definition because it is something that is desirable. The second involved how individuals' evaluate their lives in positive terms. This includes a self-measurement of experiences, relationships and personal evolution and extends into social relationships as well. The third, and final, grouping involves a higher disposition of positive affect as opposed to negative affect. This includes the consideration that life will not always be 'good' but that the good times outweigh the 'bad' times in terms of quality and quantity. By engaging in meaningful leisure on a consistent basis, participants have the opportunity to create meaningful, positive experiences for themselves. The latter two groupings are of most significance to this paper.

As Diener (2006) continued to research and write on the subject of well-being and QOL over the following decades, he developed a piece on the tenets of SWB and illbeing that sought to establish uniform definitions that could be applied globally in hopes of making research and service foci clearer for scholars and providers. He described SWB as, 'An umbrella term for the different valuations people make regarding their lives, the events happening to them, their bodies and minds, and the circumstances in which they live' (398). From there he laid out definitions for positive and negative affect, happiness and life satisfaction, ending his collection of classifications with QOL. He said of QOL that it refers to 'the degree to which a person's life is desirable versus undesirable, often with an emphasis on external components, such as environmental factors and income' (400). This designation of QOL fits the third grouping Coan (1977) established for SWB that Diener (1984) adhered to in his earliest work. Diener (2006) stated that some scholars often merge the definitions of SWB and QOL to include both life circumstances and individual perception and feelings which was confirmed in later work done by Camfield and Skevington (2008).

It should be noted, though, that there are aspects of music scene participation that resulted in negative outcomes, primarily due to substance abuse. These issues of an individual's substance abuse were not reliant on the band, their music or the scene exclusively, and occurred throughout the entirety of their daily dealings. Additionally, those who were facing these struggles were often reliant on the music and the friendships established through their participation to deal with the reality of their addictions. Those that displayed signs or expressed concern for their substance abuse issues still relied heavily on the band and its music for offering a positive outlet in spite of their struggles with addiction.

Methods

The research on which this paper is based relied on Gonzalez' (2000) Four Seasons approach to data collection. The Four Seasons include pre-ethnography, ethnography proper (immersion in the subculture through participant observation, and semi-structured interviews), thorough analysis of jottings and field notes, and the reflexive process of writing. The Four Seasons approach has four principles: (a) natural cycles: ethnographic research involves a preparation, growth, harvest, rest series which ensures that opportunities are not missed, only postponed; (b) consciousness of the linked associations of all that transpires within the music scene is relevant data; (c) the authentic reporting of the actions, interactions and discussions (this often includes letting the participants take the lead of the interview) and finally, (d) representative balance, or the necessity of showing the differences or dualities that take place within the music scene. This methodological approach was appropriate because it allowed for repeated observations of fans' interactions with the band and its music, as well as conversations, both formal and informal, about the meaning and value of the music to their lives. In order to cultivate the richest data, we often had to rely on repeated interactions with the participants to capture meaningful moments that were not remembered during the interview, or to follow-up on thoughts and experiences that transpired after their further involvement in the music scene, or based on specific incidences where the music was used outside of the concert setting to their benefit.

Study participants

The data collection methods deemed most appropriate for this investigation were indepth interviews, participant observation and textual analysis. Gatekeepers (influential people involved in the music scene) were influential in establishing connections to those deeply immersed in the subculture. Snowball sampling was generated through the endorsements of established participants (Tracy 2013). The initial participants were chosen through purposive sampling (Patton 1990) and based on the first author's pre-existing knowledge of individuals who had extensive involvement with the band; this was based on their longevity or frequency of involvement, if not both. There were 31 participants, and 2 of those were interviewed twice. Most interviews lasted one hour, but several went for as long as three hours. Pseudonyms were assigned to all informants. The participants were dispersed throughout the USA, with most living in the Western states. The fan base is older in terms of the average age of those usually affiliated with touring rock and roll bands (Hunt 2008). At the time of interview, the youngest participant was 28 years old and the oldest was 58, with an average age of 42 years.

The purpose of this paper was to establish that one's passionate immersion in a music scene can be beneficial to establishing stores of positive emotion and energy to be called upon for future use. And while there were some negative accounts of participants' involvement (Janet and Keith, drug and alcohol abuse), there were few attempts on the investigator's part to dive into other areas of potential negativity surrounding the fan base. In interviews fans sometimes made mention of specific negative incidents, whether it was a disagreement with another fan, complaints about the song selection, or dislike for a venue or city, but these complaints were not investigated in full because the interviewees did not stress the events or episodes as impactful on their participation to any significant degree. While participants' responses in regard to their involvement were overwhelmingly positive, it might serve the readers to know that this music scene did not exist in a state of utopia.

In-depth interviews

Before the start of the research period, we constructed a list of open-ended questions that were used as a template to prompt participants to respond to their personal involvement with the band and the music scene. Since that inception, the questions became more refined so as to not only address specific issues we believed to be most important, but also to allow participants the maximum expanse of feedback when speaking to their subjective experiences with the band and its music. We encouraged fans to elaborate and introduce relevant topics that were not mentioned in the interview guide, and we built off their responses to ask further related questions. We kept notes during the interview to prompt further questions, document physical or emotional reactions or emphases displayed by the interviewee, and to act as indicators of what questions needed to be further adapted or expanded. Interviews were conducted between December of 2012 and September of 2014, and all interviews were audiorecorded with the permission of the participant. This method of data collection was especially fruitful in capturing the sentiment of the positive emotions fans received from their participation. Most had never extensively talked about their history or involvement with the band, so when given the opportunity to do so, overwhelmingly people were eager to share about what the band and its music meant to their lives, in the past, present and future.

Participant observation

The first author undertook this examination as a participant as well as an observer during the study period of December 2012 through September 2014. He engaged in concert events, social gatherings associated with the event (such as pre-parties, gettogethers at fans' homes or lodging facilities, and post-concert events or afterparties), participated in the concert event as a fan which included mingling, dancing or commenting on the performance, and generally behaving in the manner as any friend would when in the company of other friends in 'special' atmospheres like the concert setting. In his role as an observer, he made mental notes, and when possible jottings, field notes or verbal recordings of the concert experience, which included how fans interacted with each other, themselves, and the band and its music. In the festival-like atmospheres where the band played multiple shows in the same location, he paid particular attention to the way the fans interacted with each other in forming or strengthening friendships during the periods of downtime between concerts. The act of observations was integral to actually seeing how people acted out their selfdescribed connection to the band and its music. Individual interaction with the band, and often other fans, captured the reality of their devotion and happiness while engaged in the music.

Textual analysis

An unmoderated email listserv dedicated to the band exists as part of a Yahoo! Groups option. Over the course of 2013 we read the often-daily postings and selected entries that contain material that would be beneficial to the research on which this paper is based. However, we have kept a record of relevant posts (serendipitously) since first joining the group in March of 2011. While the commentary is often just postings of set lists, or links to sites to download live shows, occasionally fans speak about the meaning the band or its music has for them. This often occurs after the festival-like runs when people have extended involvement with other fans and multiple

days of music. In many instances the posting fan will comment on the unique atmosphere that surrounds the fan base, the level of emotion they feel in the presence of the concerts or the significant interactions that occur throughout the duration of the event. Babbie (2010) stated that textual, or content, analysis involves who says what and why, and to what extent it has an effect on others. The listserv not only acts as a forum for fans to speak of the meaning they associate with the band and its music, but also serves as a place to inspire that sense of sharing with other fans, as well as to prompt memories of meaningful experiences. The fan discussion board, therefore, allowed fans to speak of the band and the meaning their music held for them outside of the concert setting. This showcased the positive affect received from the music in the days between each member's opportunities to attend live shows.

Data analysis and interpretation

The foundation of data analysis was grounded theory as demonstrated by Glaser and Strauss (1999) and Charmaz (2006). An understanding was reached through an inductive process which captured the realities of those participating in the research. The analysis process involved the use of a primary and secondary coding technique which commenced with multiple, thorough readings of the interview transcripts, field notes and selected excerpts of fan postings on the internet discussion board. Information deemed important based on its relevance to the research objectives was highlighted. We assigned primary codes using, when possible, in vivo terminology (the language of the participant) as part of the initial coding process. Subsequently we grouped primary codes into specific categories through focused coding (Tracy 2013). The data were managed by first establishing which content speaks to the research questions, and then delineating hierarchically the most appropriate material. Once the categories were created, themes emerged that displayed the context and content of the phenomenon being considered (Saldaña 2012). These data provided the foundation of this paper exploring how fans interact individually and socially to establish incidences of positive emotional output, and the effects of participation beyond the concert setting in their everyday lives.

Findings

Creating stores of positive emotion through music

The first time I saw Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons was in 2002 outside Denver, Colorado. I was attending a Widespread Panic concert and there was a side-stage with bands playing before the main event. Simply killing time, I walked over to see who was playing. Not quite sure what I had stumbled onto, I found myself immediately absorbed into the sounds that rained down from the stage. I walked over to a guy who was recording the show and said, 'Who the fuck is this guy?' He responded, 'Jerry Joseph. He's amazing, isn't he?' I nodded yes, uninterested in speaking anymore or perhaps unable. The rawness of the emotion and the heaviness of the guitar cut through me as if it were allowing for my soul to soak in the truth. I was simply overwhelmed by the passion that seemed to radiate from this man and his guitar. I had always considered myself in the know when it came to finding high quality music that grabbed me, but on this day I was being served notice that I had just found something special [Notes from first author's journal].

I have always been curious about what people hope to get by attending a Jerry Joseph concert, so I often try to have that as the last question of the interview. After they have talked about their history with music, the friends they have made along the way, their favourite songs and how they use the music outside of the concert setting, I want to know why it is, time and again, they keep coming back for more. To date no one has set a number on how many Jerry Joseph shows would be enough. I think most cannot fathom a time when they would no longer be able to see him perform. The following excerpts highlight the power of the music for these fans, and why it is this particular band and its music are so meaningful to their lives.

Positive emotions

It was commonly stated by the participants of this study that the music of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons was rife with emotion and covered the spectrum of the human experience. Coupled with this, it was unanimously reported that the energy and passion exuded on stage by Joseph was something that was largely unparalleled in other bands' performances. For these reasons, fans reported that they were able to 'get into a groove' with the band that allowed them to focus on the moment, where the only important thing was the music. If there was a particular issue in their life they were dealing with, for some, the forum of the concert experience allowed them to block it out and revel in the experience of the moment. For others, the concert was the exact place where they were able to work through the tribulations of their lives.

I asked Dani (28 December 2013) about her first time seeing the band and what she remembered about it. She responded that, 'It was a feeling of being so alive that I don't know if I'd ever experienced that before.' I was taken aback by that powerful statement of her sense of emotion at the time, so I asked her if that feeling only occurred the first time, or if it was something that persisted, to which she replied, '[Those were] my exact thoughts even at last night's show. How alive it makes me feel. I know when I'm there that there's no other place in the world where I'd rather be.' Towards the end of our interview when I asked for closing thoughts, she had this to say:

I feel very fortunate to have this in my life. I never would have pictured in my earlier years that this would have been something that was so important. It's a priority in my life. I'm okay with that. I think the music, the people, the friends, are all kind of separate from the rest of my life; it's like a completely different relationship that I don't really incorporate in my everyday life, although it's always in my brain. It's always there. And I don't ever picture that going away.

Overcoming hardship

As mentioned in the introduction, there is an air of hedonism that surrounds the band (though, this could be said about many rock and roll bands) which makes the concert setting an easy and acceptable place to indulge in the use of alcohol or drugs. Oddly enough, due to Jerry Joseph's sobriety, most fans are careful to not be blatantly open about their indulgences as a simple respect to Joseph. While he is certainly aware of what transpires in the music scene surrounding his band, it is well known that it is not something he condones. Janet (15 June 2013; 31 July 2014) and Keith (18 June 2013; 29 June 2014) were two participants who I had the serendipitous

privilege of interviewing both during their period of addictive indulgence and after they had been sober for quite some time (Janet, seven months; Keith, one year).

While there was a degree of pride felt for their desire and ability to overcome their addictions on my part, it was also very interesting to see how they responded to certain questions both before and after attaining sobriety. It is interesting to note that for both, the music and the scene was not only of utmost importance to their life during their period of addiction, but that it remained so even after they had successfully become clean; in some ways it had become more important. In my first interview with Janet (15 June 2013), I asked her if she saw her involvement as a method of escape. She responded that it was not the music but the drugs that were the escape. She went on to say that, 'Music [is what] I turn to in order to come back to life; to hold on to. [The Jackmormons' music] allows me to hold on to life.' Janet started talking about themes in Joseph's music, specifically death, a subject that she had discussed earlier due to her father and husband's passing from cancer, and she said of Joseph:

When he sings about something that I've gone through, then it's ok that I've been through it. When he talks about 'put your fingers into my wounds' [a line from the song Radio Cab], dude, whether you're probing, or putting them in there to stop the bleeding, that's it for me. The music goes inside those wounds and is somehow holding it together.

For Janet, while she still enjoyed the music and the scene during her period of excess, she found that her involvement was almost another form of addiction. Not only was it an acceptable outlet for using, but she found it difficult to take away positive experiences into her life outside the concert setting, and was constantly looking towards her next 'fix' of shows. Upon becoming clean she was able to actually relate to the music in terms of a personal message of triumph, and both the music and Joseph himself served as a guide in her new life of being clean, happy and aware. She said that now she had 'slowed down enough to pay attention. It fills my soul. And I like that' (31 July 2014). Janet had reached a point of clarity in her life that she had never had before. She was adamant that for her to reach this summit in her life, the music of Jerry Joseph was integral to her positive growth as an individual.

I first spoke with Keith (18 June 2013) in the days following a two-day event in Telluride, Colorado, which is where I conducted my first interview with Janet. At his suggestion we met in a park near Denver, and we sat next to a tree in the shade, overlooking a lake and numerous people out recreating. He was not in a very good state of mind, as evidenced by his opening statement; 'I'm in a really fragile state; it might be good for the questions, you know?' Though clearly somewhat depressed, in large part due to his addiction, he was very hospitable and forthcoming throughout the interview. We were talking about how often he listens to the band's music, and he said that he listens to the Jackmormons 'every day' and that he could not 'seem to broaden [his] horizons'. He went on to say that, 'it all seems to fit my life, I guess that's how everyone feels'.

Because I was well aware of his substance abuse issues, and his depression was staring me in the face, I was a bit taken aback by this assertion. Predominately everyone I had talked to up to that point said the same thing, but they were all in much happier mind states. And while those participants frequently stated even though Joseph had a lot of 'dark' music, they often felt it was delivered in a healthy balance and was all reflective of the spectrum of emotion that everyone faces simply through shared humanity. But for Keith, it was not presented in that manner. He was connecting to the darker songs and lyrics because of the state of his life. In

addition to his substance issues, he was facing a messy romance on the skids that involved a young son. Life for Keith was not good by any standard at this point.

As the conversation unfolded, we started talking about those favourite songs (at least as they were at that moment while he was immersed in melancholy), and he brought up the song Oil. He said, 'It is like the ultimate song. It will make me cry. The way I interpret it, he just wants to turn to oil so that all the pain is gone. Be done with it.' I asked him how that related to his life at this specific moment, to which he answered:

Lately it gets me because of the line (singing, referring to his son) 'picture of a little boy who looks a lot like me.' And then he says something about 'I hope that he finds love and is loyal, I guess I'll find out on the day I return to oil.'

The following two days were to feature the Jackmormons in Denver, Colorado. After we had finished our interview, we parted, and the following day he called me. He told me that he had spoken with Jerry Joseph and that he (Keith) was given the direction to clean up his act. Joseph was concerned about Keith's health and his ability to tend to the needs of his young family. Keith took this as a moment for action, and chose to begin his life of sobriety on that day, 19 June 2013; he did not attend either concert in Denver.

A year later, on his one-year clean date, Keith called me and was justifiably happy. He said that he would like to do the interview again, as he felt he would have different answers to some of the questions. I, of course, obliged and we planned to do so at the Dixie Mattress Festival (DMF) in rural Oregon 10 days later. We also happened to be sharing a house together with other fans as well.

Keith (29 June 2014) was in a much happier state of mind, and the life and colour had returned to his face and personality. And while he had some issues on the first night of the DMF due to his past involvement of always being inebriated in some form at the festival, he was able to overcome the anxiety of his presence through the help of a few close friends. We sat down to chat after the second night of the festival and Keith reflected on the course of the last several years, and especially so on the last one for which he had been sober. He said, 'Music is such a part of my life that of course it's going to be a part of my recovery. It's nice when you have your favorite musician singing about sobriety.' For Keith, the music retained its significance, but changed in that he was able to appreciate it more when he was clean. It was still a part of his daily life, something he felt was integral to his happiness and identity, and he was proud to say that he was a fan, and thankful to both Joseph and his 'family' of friends for their support. The music 'lets [him] know that [he's] doing what's right'. He stated about the previous night's show that, 'I felt about as good as I can possibly feel. That feeling of euphoria. And I'm glad I feel that now that I'm clean.'

Reflection and future benefit

Just as there are/were fans who struggled with various issues, there were many who seemed to lead lives they viewed with clarity. Being that the fan base is a predominately middle-aged crowd most had established their place in life professionally, personally and socially. So when other participants responded to what they hoped to get from the music or how the music affected them outside the concert experience, it was often from a foundation of sincere appreciation unclouded by negatively impactful external filters such as drugs and alcohol.

After the 2012 shows in Tulum, Mexico, a fan posted to the email listserv, ‘What a great fucking time. A beautiful setting, and once again another slice of the planet that I was exposed to as a direct result of Jerry’s music and the “family” that has grown around it.’ This fan went on to talk about all the little things that transpired to make it such a memorable event. He continued by talking about the set lists and the specific songs that were played, and one comment he made in regard to the song *Beautiful Child of God* jumped out at me. He said:

I love when bands make a ‘statement’ with their set opener whether it’s with a fast hard charging song that gets asses moving or a slow one that forces you to listen, contemplate and buy into the vision ... *Beautiful Child of God* can accomplish the latter by serving notice that you’re getting a front row seat for a few minutes of blessing in church before the rock show starts. (25 April 2012)

This allusion to religion and spirituality from this fan’s posting illustrates a theme that was almost ubiquitous to participants’ responses and a focus area previously documented in related research (Harmon and Dox forthcoming). And while not every fan described their involvement as spiritual, whether in a traditional religious context or not, every fan indicated that their involvement was unique in providing emotion they got nowhere else and was a source of profound enjoyment that significantly contributed to their QOL. The enjoyment came from being able to interact with close friends identified as family; the music and the structureless environment gave them a safe place to recharge or work through the issues of their life; and it was also a place to re-centre themselves and reinforce their identity and sense of self.

I asked Kurt (29 July 2014) how he felt in the days following a show, to which he answered, ‘The day of [the concert] I get excited and I’ll be trying to skip out [of work] by 2pm. I’ll start to get pumped up. After the shows, I’ll be able to store positive energy for weeks, months, maybe even years.’ I was somewhat caught off guard by that, and I responded, ‘Really?’ To which he rejoined, ‘You’re creating memories and stories you can tell. And you’re doing it with your friends, your family. What could be better than sharing something like this with the people you love?’

Bella (3 August 2014) also spoke to this notion when she said that,

There’s definitely something retained. Being able to go back to that place and that moment. It’s like the cumulative effect of the more shows you see, the more experiences like this you have, it just opens something up and you carry that with you every single time.

While speaking with Jack (28 June 2014) I directly asked him if he could store positive emotions from his involvement in the music scene to draw on in the future. He pondered this question for a moment and then responded:

There is a definite afterglow. You think about what you saw and relive it, acclimate yourself to work, which does suck to go back to. I spend most of the day doing that for a while, thoughts just pop into my head. It improves my quality of life immensely. Everyone needs a release; this is our release. Everyone just has to find what works for them ... Music is so inclusive and develops links between people. People can reach so much understanding from music with one another, it promotes peace. Worldwide there

are examples of how music has brought people together. When you find your thing, like we found ours, the message is to do your best to make it the best it can be. Don't take it too seriously, but have the most fun. Make it a better experience for everyone. That's part of it. Find the love and the peace, and do it well. That is what we do here, and that is why we keep coming back. Our involvement is so important to our well-being, and I think I can speak for everyone here; we are both happy and lucky to be a part of it.

Discussion

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) said that our 'quality of life does not depend directly on what others think of us or what we own'. Instead it comes down to 'how we feel about ourselves and about what happens to us. To improve life one must improve the quality of experience' (44). McIntyre (1989) outlined four elements that are integral to understanding an individual's leisure association as a form of enduring involvement: significant importance to the participant's life; a high level of enjoyment derived from participation; the activity is an outlet for self-expression and one's participation in the activity is central to their lifestyle. The ability of the fans to alter their QOL for the better through their lengthy, passionate immersion in the music scene surrounding Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons has been demonstrated throughout this paper. And while some accounts shed light on the negative aspects of participation, these realities were countered by the sheer value of the music and the dependence on friends made through involvement with those who were dealing with serious personal issues.

For most participants, however, their participation was not clouded by significant problems, and the outlet of the music scene surrounding the band was a place for release, reinvigoration, bonding and happiness. This is not to say that there were not issues in their 'regular' lives that caused concern or needed attendance, but that the music scene was a place where the fans could interact with themselves and one another and develop positive experiences that could affect their mood and disposition beyond the concert setting. This idea that fans could create stores of positive emotions through their involvement that could later impact other experiences, interactions and relationships for the better is what Fredrickson (2001) called the broaden-and-build theory

Broaden

Fredrickson (2001) theorized that the creation of positive emotions can help people look at the episodes of their life in a broader context, therefore diminishing the impact of a negative incident and helping to put things into perspective. The fans who participated in the study on which this paper is based all spoke to their personal truths of the powerful and positive experiences they had through their interaction with the music. In addition, the friendships they formed, often referred to as 'family', were of utmost importance (Harmon and Kyle forthcoming), and for many these relationships had lasted years, if not decades. The ability to share not only a love for the music but mutual appreciation developed over time caused many of the respondents to feel as if they could call on their friends in the fan base in times of need. Fredrickson (1998) said that:

Shared experiences of positive emotions create not only mutual enjoyment in the moment, but also enduring alliances, friendships, or family bonds. These social

relationships become enduring resources that individuals can draw on later in times of need. (311)

Carruthers and Hood (2004) stated that people can train themselves to ‘cultivate, notice and savor the positive experiences in their lives’ (230). For many, the relationships formed were just as important as the music, and when coupled together, made for an experience that was largely positive on their lives.

Build

Fredrickson (2001) said that ‘finding positive meaning triggers positive emotions’ (223) and that ‘experiences of positive emotions can build enduring psychological resources and trigger upward spirals toward enhanced emotional well-being’ (224). For many of the participants, their past involvement in other music scenes was still important to them in terms of maintaining friendships and relating to a personal history of connection to and development through music. Much as Kotarba (2005) said in his work on middle-aged fans, in this music scene there was importance in having a concrete assurance of ‘who they were’ for the participants, and this was equally dependent on their past as it was on their present involvement. This connection to personal music history is integral to Fredrickson’s (2001) broaden-and-build theory in that it is the very building on people’s personal and social resources that allows ‘positive emotions to transform people for the better, giving them better lives in the future’ (224). And while positive emotions and the ‘broadened mindsets’ they produce are ephemeral, they can still have significant and long-lasting effects (Fredrickson 2003). This sentiment was captured in Kurt’s (29 July 2014) statement that he ‘would be able to store positive energy for weeks, months, maybe even years’.

Fredrickson (2003) said that ‘community transformation becomes possible because each person’s positive emotions can resound through others’ (335). Essentially the fans built on each other’s positivity in the exchange of reciprocal sentiments garnered through engagement in the music scene. For the fans who participated, their involvement was meaningful on a personal level because of the role the music played in their lives in terms of identity maintenance, meaning making and creating moments of happiness. The fact that it was shared with people they truly cared about added to that sense of positivity. That they got to look forward to future interactions with their ‘family’ and the music created further reason to be happy, and provided a positive foundation from which to draw in their personal lives should the need ever arise.

For the participants, their involvement was integral to their QOL and the events were often looked forward to and planned for far in advance. The mere knowledge that they had events scheduled months in advance, for some, was enough to provide a daily boost of positivity, even if they had been removed from the music scene for an extended period of time. The time leading up to and immediately following the concert events were of profound significance to participants’ state of mind and level of positivity, and often possessed a feeling they wanted to hold on to and looked forward to capturing again. In short, participants were working on developing and maintaining their own authentic happiness through their passionate connection to leisure.

Conclusion

The important question that is asked more and more in scholarly leisure research these days was put forth by Grybovych and Dieser (2010) in their ethnodrama on happiness and leisure: ‘What is happiness, authentic happiness, [and] how do we achieve it [through leisure]?’ (33). Following Aristotle, Kingwell (1998) said that happiness was in friendships. When a person interacts in close social networks, forming and strengthening ties, the result is the most genuine form of happiness. Carruthers and Hood (2005) voiced the same opinion, stating that leisure is a setting for ‘initiating, maintaining and rejuvenating social relationships’ (33). The positive effects of participation, especially when done through shared interaction, will enhance positive feelings in one’s daily life and lead to the potential to have better lives, personal growth and ‘a never-ending spiral of personal evolution’ (32).

The focus on middle-aged participants in leisure, however, has not been developed to the extent that is necessary. For the fans of Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons, a predominately middle-aged crowd, their involvement in the music scene allowed them to engage in meaningful interactions with the music, themselves and other close friends to build stores of positive energy to bring to their ‘everyday lives’ outside the concert experience. This is in tune with Frith’s (1987) ‘social functions of music’, in that the fans relied on the music to cultivate the emotions they could not express for themselves; they identified with Joseph, not out of a desire to emulate him, but because they felt as if they were able to learn about themselves through his music; the music shaped their sense of time and the music was something they came to possess as it was incorporated into their identity.

Understanding the personal threads of involvement over the life course is important when attempting to understand how past leisure choices affect future leisure choices and how involvement in a leisure activity affects other aspects of one’s life away from the activity. By exploring the importance of one’s development and growth through leisure we can build an understanding of how leisure can be called on when faced with tragedies or traumas. The process of identity is always in flux, so when there are sure footholds in leisure to anchor oneself to, it follows that these associations can be integral to understanding the development of the self, and may provide comfort when faced with hardships. Finally, understanding the emotions of leisure involvement is fundamental to the leisure industry when it comes to providing leisure and recreation services, and how to adjust those offerings as patrons grow and age.

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Notes

1. The festival centres on the Jackmormons and is named after one of their songs, Dixie Mattress.
2. The pronouns ‘I’ and ‘me’ refer to the first author throughout.

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