The Past That Never Was and Always Will Be:

Feelings of Nostalgia Exhibited by Theme Park Guests

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Degree

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Leonard Anglin and Rosalie Anglin. I am grateful for their unconditional love, support, and encouraging words. I am eternally grateful for their advice, their understanding, and their inspiration. This dissertation is a testament to the times we have shared together, the joy we have brought to each other, and the continued happiness that will fill our lives. I am forever grateful to be blessed with them as my parents. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

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ABSTRACT

Nostalgia has been shown to be a powerful force in the marketing of various products and services, such as theme parks. Dollywood, a theme park nestled in the Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee, does not try to evoke a modern vision of the future, but instead, serves as a tribute to the heritage of the area, using nostalgia to appeal to its guests, many of whom directly or indirectly experienced this celebrated past. Guided by hermeneutic phenomenology and using in-depth interviews, the following study uncovered a more nuanced understanding of how visitors of Dollywood interpret their experiences through the lens of nostalgia. Five main themes emerged from the data: (a) childhood revisited, (b) interpersonal and intergenerational connections, (c) appreciation for heritage and values, (d) yearning for an idealized state, and (e) connecting with the celebrity. These findings illustrate the role that nostalgia plays in visitors' experiences to Dollywood. Through these findings, a new category of nostalgia is proposed. Implications for management are also presented.

Keywords: nostalgia, Dollywood, theme parks, Appalachia, tourism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

Statement of Purpose 3

Paradigmatic Approach 4

Research Methods 5

Research Questions 7

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 8

The Concept of Nostalgia 8

Defining Nostalgia 10

Causes of Nostalgia 11

Categories of Nostalgia 14

Personal 14

Historical 15

Real 15

Simulated 16

Collective 16

Anticipatory 17

Consumed 17

Nostalgia as an Appeal in Tourism 18

Dollywood 23

A Brief Tour of Dollywood 27

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 33

Hermeneutic Phenomenology 34

Criteria for a Strong Study Driven by Hermeneutic Phenomenology 37

Research Design 40

Participant Selection and Participants 41

Data Collection Methods 44

Data Analysis 46

Quality Assurance 47

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS 49

"Sometimes an Old Memory Gets in My Eye": Childhood Revisited 49

"Daddy Was an Old Time Preacher Man": Interpersonal and Intergenerational Connections 58

"Appalachian Memories": Appreciation for Heritage and Values 66

"Those Were the Days": Yearning for an Idealized State 75

"Unlikely Angel": Connecting with the Celebrity 78

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 82

Nostalgia Through the Lived Experience of Visiting Dollywood 82

Implications for Theory: Interpersonal Nostalgia 88

Implications for Management: Dollywood's Future Is in the Past 92

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION 99

Limitations 99

Implications for Future Research 100

Final Thoughts 100

REFERENCES 102

APPENDICES 119

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval 120

Appendix B: Informed Consent Statement 122

Appendix C: Interview Protocol 124

Appendix D: Interview Support Materials 125

Appendix E: Music Video Screenshots 128

VITA 130

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Summary of Participants 43

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Speaking to Terry Wogan in March of 1983, Dolly Parton articulated her vision to create a destination that reflected her hometown-area:

> I have an idea that I've had for years that's beginning to become a reality. There's a Place in East Tennessee called Gatlinburg, in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park which is one of the biggest tourist areas in the United States, and I happened to have been born and raised in that part of the country. And there will be a new park – a new city, actually – called Dollywood USA, and it's like a mountain fantasy, like Disneyland, only it will be in the Smoky Mountains. I would say that within three to five years that it will be a big, big park. We'll have a golf course, I'm gonna have a race track, we'll have all the fantasy things. It's a major dream...similar to Disneyland, only there will be many, many other things: canoeing, horseback ridin', campin' out, and actually, sort of a southern way of life, a combination of all the wonderful things of this world that people look for (Schmidt, 2017, p. 219).

This dream came to fruition in 1986 with the opening of Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Along the foothills of the Smoky Mountains lies over 185 acres dedicated to the people of East Tennessee, a population who Dolly Parton refers to as "my people" (Johnson, 2014, p. 47). In this love letter to her people, guests escape to a world of thrills, tradition, hospitality, and nostalgia. Traveling along Showstreet, the guiding avenue of the park, visitors are welcomed to experience a world that appears to be the embodiment of a time of the past – a past that may be distant, but yet, familiar. Greeters in calico clothing assist guests in finding their way to the attractions that beckon to entertain and transport to a time of simplicity. In

Craftsman's Valley, artisans dedicated to preserving traditional skills are busy blacksmithing, shaping pottery, carving wood, and boiling pork rinds. As the apple butter cooks in a kettle heated with burning wood, the smell of the past fills the air. In Jukebox Junction, the songs of Elvis Presley, Hank Williams, Chuck Berry, and the Everly Brothers can be heard throughout the streets of this homage to 1950s Sevier County, complete with roadsters, hotrods, and a drive-in restaurant. Dollywood does not try to evoke a modern vision of the future, but instead, serves as a tribute to the past. However, this past is one, like many theme parks illustrate, "that never was and always will be" (Wright, 2010, p. 18), using nostalgia to appeal to its guests, many of whom experienced this celebrated past.

Nostalgia has been shown to be a powerful force in the marketing of various products and services (Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Cross, 2015; Holbrook, 1993; Lasaleta, Sedikides, & Vohs, 2014). Tourism destinations are no exception. Previous scholars have examined how tourism sites that rely on nostalgic associations communicate to and attract visitors (Fletchall, 2013; Leong, Yeh, Hsiao, & Huan, 2015; Marschall, 2012). Although nostalgia is considered a driving factor for visiting personal memory tourism destinations, such as re-visiting one's hometown, it has been questioned as an impetus for visiting other popular tourist locales, such as heritage tourism locations (Caton, & Santos, 2007; Erll, 2011; Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003). Even though heritage tourism destinations, such as Route 66, are sites of historical significance for the population of the United States, there are other rather immensely popular destinations that also acknowledge the cultural history of a nation – theme parks. Although theme parks, like Dollywood, are re-creations of bygone eras on locations that may have never housed the idealized structures that the theme park represents – essentially, filtered cultural preservation

sites and constructions of hyperreality – emotions evoked at these destinations, as well as motivations for repeat visits, may be influenced by feelings of nostalgia (Bakir & Baker, 2011).

At the forefront of these destinations is a shared memory of childhood, driven by a set of familiar stories, characters, products, and cultural artifacts (Cross, 2015). Thus, whether the theme park is regional, like Dollywood, or global, like the Walt Disney World Resort, nostalgia is at the heart of the experience communicated to the visitor. The childhood recreated in these theme parks is an idealized one – a childhood that the individual may have experienced, may have remembered experiencing even if they physically did not, or wished to have experienced during that period in his or her life (Lindgren, Sparrman, Samuelsson, & Cardell, 2015). With the theme park acting as a personal memory tourism destination, a place to relive positive associations from the past, guests are able to forge strong bonds with the site, and, in turn, become repeat visitors to the destination (Erll, 2011).

Statement of Purpose

Although nostalgia's role in theme park appeal has been explored, previous studies tend to focus on the largest theme parks, such as the Walt Disney World Resort and the Disneyland Resort (Cross, 2015; Willis, 1995a; Willis, 1995b; Wasko, 2001), or examine historical amusement destinations like Coney Island and Blackpool Pleasure Beach (Cross & Walton, 2005; Kasson, 1978). Little exists on the role that nostalgia plays in developing guests' experiences in smaller, regional theme parks. Although Dollywood's nostalgic theming has been acknowledged in the popular press (Bekiempis, 2015; Harlan, 2015), scholars have given little attention to the experiences of guests of the theme park. A gap exists regarding guests' interpretations of their experiences and the role that nostalgia plays in shaping their understanding of that experience.

This study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature on nostalgia and its role in the guest experience at regional theme parks. This study is significant due to its practical application for not just the managers of the eighth largest employer in the state of Tennessee (East Tennessee Economic Development Agency, 2017), but also for managers of other destinations that look to communicate a nostalgic experience to their guests. The elements at a theme park that a visitor interacts with, such as the attractions and theming, serve as brand touch points. These are elements in which the brand creates an emotional connection with the guest, allowing for continued consumption of the brand (Shimp, 2010). By understanding how visitors interpret their experiences at Dollywood, a greater understanding of what is significant to visitors of the park is illuminated. This provides insight in how to craft marketing communication messages touting the benefits of the park, but also identifying the elements found within the park that serve as points of emotional connection with the visitor. As sustainable tourism scholars have concluded, a nostalgic theme may no longer be relevant to the target audience when those who personally experienced those time periods referenced in the theme reach death (Alderman, Benjamin, & Schneider, 2012; Benjamin, Schneider, & Alderman, 2012). Therefore, it is important for managers to understand the role nostalgia plays in their guests' experiences in order to make informed decisions regarding the future of their destination.

Paradigmatic Approach

As Pinch and Bijker (1987) state, research is shaped through the investigator's philosophical assumptions, view of reality, and knowledge discovery. In order to understand "the world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 36), this study employs an interpretive approach based on hermeneutic phenomenology to gain further insight into the role that nostalgia plays in the experience of visiting Dollywood.

According to Polkinghorne (1989), phenomenology is concerned with exploring the human experience. This theoretical avenue is utilized in order to understand the lived existence of any stakeholder associated with the phenomenon. Hermeneutic phenomenology asks the researcher to go beyond a simple account of the objects that are in the world, but to see the meanings that arise from these objects (Cerbone, 2006). This tradition was born out of the work of Martin Heidegger, who advanced the idea that experience is formed through the interpretation of one's living world. The interpretations that come to fruition are governed by the situation in which the interpreter is in, what Heidegger called *da-sein* or 'being there' (Heidegger, 1927/1996). By combining the elements of being engaged in language, known as hermeneutics, as well as the lived experience in phenomenology, Heidegger aimed to develop a way for researchers to illuminate the conditions in which understanding takes place (Laverty, 2003). Interpretation goes beyond a tool for knowledge, and instead, as a way of understanding how human beings exist and understand the world in which they live (Koch, 1995). Elements of hermeneutic phenomenology include questions of experience, understanding, and meaning; recognizing the individual as a self-interpreting being; taking into account what is shared in terms of culture, history, practice, and language; and the interpreter's participation in uncovering data (Koch, 1995; Laverty, 2003).

Research Methods

The goal of qualitative research is for participants to divulge their experiences and narratives (Creswell, 2007). In order to understand the experiences and interpretations of guests at Dollywood, this study employed a framework of hermeneutic phenomenology using in-depth interviews with guests of Dollywood. Individual, in-depth interviews allow for the participant to reconstruct events that the researcher may or may not have ever participated in and reveal

meanings that might not be visible to the researcher. Working from these revealed meanings, long-held assumptions can be challenged. Individual, in-depth interviews also allow for the portrayal of ongoing social processes that may be taken-for-granted in daily life, such as visiting a theme park in East Tennessee. This technique allows the researcher to explore complex, counterintuitive, or even contradictory matters that are contained in the investigated phenomenon. As put forth by Taylor, Haley, Wells, and Pardun (1994), "meaning of a phenomenon is not constant and does not pre-exist the individual, rather, it is the result of process where in the individual acts with a phenomenon and interprets those actions" (p. 224). Wittenberg-Lyles (2006) also notes that the individual, in-depth interview provides an opportunity for individuals to recall their experiences and re-examine their feelings and associations related to the experience in question.

For this study, seventeen individual, in-depth interviews were conducted with Dollywood Season Passholders. Those who elect to purchase a Season Pass to Dollywood generally visit the park on multiple occasions during a given year. Numerous benefits exist to being a Season Passholder, including complimentary tickets for an additional guest, discounted tickets for friends and family, exclusive ride availability, discounts on merchandise and accommodations, and discounts on attractions within the area (Cone, 2017). Previous studies have found that a tourist's emotional connection to a destination plays a vital role in his or her interpretation of the experience (Gnoth, 1997; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Emotionally charged memories tend to be recollected at a greater rate than those that are not characterized as having an emotional connection (Sharot & Yonelinas, 2008). Satisfaction, a form of emotional connection, has been found to increase the tourist's loyalty to the destination, thus resulting in more frequent visitation (Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth 2005). Therefore, the participants of this study are those who are

generally viewed as frequent visitors to Dollywood and who have an emotional connection to the theme park. Those visitors who have the highest chance of meeting these criteria are the Season Passholders. Due to their frequent visitations to the theme park, their perceived knowledge of the offerings, and the number of experiences to recall, these individuals provide unique insight related to their experiences at the park compared to a single-day guest who may have no emotional connection to Dollywood or be able to recall his or her experiences.

Research Questions

Hudson and Ozanne (1988) note that hermeneutic phenomenological research is designed to understand behavior, not predict it. In order to address the role that nostalgia plays in visitors' experiences related to Dollywood, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: How do Season Passholders of Dollywood interpret their experiences of the theme park?

RQ2: For Season Passholders, in what way does nostalgia play a role in the interpretation of the experience of visiting Dollywood?

RQ3: How do these interpretations inform and build upon the concept of nostalgia?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nostalgic associations are ubiquitous in American culture. Sequels and reboots of classic cinematic endeavors such as *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, *Stephen King's IT*, and *Ghostbusters* have graced cinema screens in recent years. Television programs that have long been off the air, such as *Roseanne*, *Will & Grace*, and *Murphy Brown* have returned to their respective networks. Other television programming, such as *Stranger Things*, a series dealing with supernatural entities and dimensions in the mid-1980s, reminds viewers of and provides a glimpse into the popular culture of that time period. Finally, it is not unusual to find a diner, such as the Park West Diner in Little Falls, New Jersey or Pop's Diner in Hendersonville, North Carolina, housing a jukebox, Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe portraits, Formica tables, and other décor reminiscent of the 1950s. As mentioned previously, nostalgia has been shown to be a popular driver for consumption, but also an important area of academic research.

This dissertation chapter examines literature that clarifies what nostalgia is and how it is understood in the context of tourism, and more specifically, theme parks. This literature review highlights the development of the concept of nostalgia, how it is defined, the types of nostalgia that have been described by previous scholars, and how it has been applied in certain marketing contexts, specifically, tourism.

The Concept of Nostalgia

Nostalgia has previously been examined in numerous contexts including psychology (Batcho, 1995; Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008; Sedikides, Wildschut, & Baden, 2004; Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, and Routledge. 2006), tourism (Caton & Santos, 2007; Cross & Walton, 2005; Erll, 2011; Lindgren et al., 2015; Marschall, 2012), consumer

behavior (Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Cross, 2015; Havlena & Holak, 1991; Holbrook & Schindler, 1991), advertising (Marchegiani & Phau, 2005; Meyers, 2009; Pascal, Sprott, & Muehling, 2002; Stern, 1992), retail (Chen, Yeh, & Huan, 2014; Spaid, 2013), sociology (Davis, 1979), leisure (Gvion, 2009), and geography (Fletchall, 2013). The concept originates in the Greek language, derived from the words 'nostos,' meaning to "return home or to one's native land," and 'algos,' referring to "pain, suffering, or grief" (Havlena & Holak, 1991, p. 323). Until the early twentieth century, nostalgia was understood as a medical condition brought upon by homesickness (Havlena & Holak, 1991; Hofer, 1688/1934). This affliction was believed to carry symptoms including depression, insomnia, cardiac palpations, anorexia, and feebleness. Although present in the *Odyssey* and the Bible, as well as in the writings of Hippocrates and Caesar, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the affliction was considered to be a horrendous omen that struck only Swiss mercenaries – due to demons inhabiting the brain and changes in atmospheric pressure – complete with an incessant ringing of cowbells (Sedikides et al., 2008).

By the mid-twentieth century, a shift in the understanding of nostalgia had evolved from a medical condition to a psychological disorder as a form of depression, although still related to homesickness or yearning to return to a previous state in life (Batcho, 1998; Sedikides et al., 2004). Finally, homesickness was separated from nostalgia due to research classifying homesickness as a form of separation anxiety (Davis, 1979). As Wildschut et al., (2006) found, homesickness is driven by an individual's place of origin, while nostalgia may encompass a variety of places, people, objects, or other cues.

More recent perspectives have conceptualized the phenomenon as a personal and cultural practice. Nostalgia has been identified as a mechanism for individuals to designate meaning to symbolic objects (Belk, 1988; Belk, 1990; Cross, 2015), to maintain identity in the face of

transitional life episodes (Davis, 1979; Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck; 1996), as a redemptive technique to turn negative events into positive associations (Cross, 2015; Havlena & Holak, 2015), and to enhance the perception of one's self (Havlena & Holak, 1991; Muehling & Pascal, 2012; Meyers, 2009).

Defining Nostalgia

Previous literature has defined nostalgia in various iterations. Davis (1979), in his classic book on the phenomenon, differentiates nostalgia from other feelings toward the past, in that nostalgic inclinations require a filtering of personal memories. In Davis's conceptualization of nostalgia, the phenomenon is "a positively toned evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling toward the present or impending circumstance" (p. 18). Building on the definition set forth by Davis, Holbrook and Schindler (1991) offer a more comprehensive definition of the phenomenon as "a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favorable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)" (p. 330).

Although Holbrook and Schindler acknowledge the preference component of nostalgia, the authors make a direct point to move beyond the negative connotations associated with nostalgia and instead, generalize the concept to a more positive preference for those associations related to one's past. Stern (1992) also provides a definition in which she conceptualizes nostalgia as "an emotional state in which an individual yearns for an idealized or sanitized version of an earlier time period" (p. 11). This definition acknowledges that individuals filter their recollected memories or preferences through "rose-tinted glasses" (Hepper, Ritchie, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2012, p. 114). What also needs to be acknowledged when

conceptualizing the nostalgia is that it can be a bittersweet emotional state, meaning that an individual could experience dichotomous feelings at the same time related to a single recollection. For example, feelings of joy and sadness, gratitude and longing desire, pleasure and regret, and a sense of loss are potential associations that could be linked with a single nostalgic recollection (Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Holak & Havlena, 1998).

Causes of Nostalgia

Several factors have been found to induce an individual's nostalgic emotional response including "music, photographs, movies, events (often 'special' or 'momentous'), settings, odors, advertisements, clothing, people's appearance, heritage, retailing, furniture, gifts, 'close others' (family members, friends, partners), political imagery, threatening stimuli, and a deliberate response to an uncomfortable psychological state, to name a few" (Marchegiani & Phau, 2013b, p. 138).

In a comprehensive study regarding the triggers of nostalgia, Wildschut et al. (2006) uncovered that negative affect was a frequent cause, such as a mechanism for overcoming moments of sadness or loneliness. In their study of British undergraduates, the authors concluded that those participants in the negative-mood condition were more nostalgic than those in the other two conditions. The authors also proposed that nostalgia served as a warehouse of positive memories, and found that those the participants in the nostalgic condition reported more positive emotions than those in the control group. The study also tested the proposal that nostalgia enhanced positive self-regard. Finally, the study demonstrated the use of nostalgia to strengthen social bonds. Those participants in the nostalgic condition felt stronger social connectedness than those in the control group, in that the nostalgic participants had stronger

feelings of being loved and protected, experienced reduced attachment anxiety, and conveyed stronger interpersonal ability (Sedikides et al., 2008).

A variety of cues may induce nostalgic reflection. Auditory cues, such as music, have been found to trigger nostalgic emotions (Barrett et. al, 2010; Batcho, 2007; Chou & Lien, 2014; Holbrook & Schindler, 1989; Janata, Tomic, & Rakowski, 2007; Juslin, Liljestrom, Vastfjall, Barradas, & Silva, 2008; Zentner, Grandjean, & Scherer, 2008). Orth and Bourrain (2008) found that scent was a superior stimulus compared to music in terms of evoking nostalgic recollections in individuals due to olfactory memory relying on minimal cognitive involvement. Numerous scholars have investigated how commercial brands serve as an impetus in driving nostalgic recollections, whether through identity alignment, aesthetic pleasure, or brand resonance (Cross, 2015; Chen, Yeh, & Huan, 2014; Shields & Johnson, 2016). Holak and Havlena (1992) note that objects tend to elicit strong memories of the individuals who were associated with them, especially both living and deceased family members linked through objects and events.

Nostalgia has been found to be a highly personal emotion involving complex emotional responses (Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Holak & Havlena, 1998). Treating nostalgia as a psychographic variable, scholars have explored the notion of nostalgia proneness (Holbrook, 1993; Marchegiani & Phau, 2013a; Routledge, Arndt, J., Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2008; Shields & Johnson, 2016). According to Seehusen et al., (2013), two views of nostalgia proneness exist: the sociality view and the maladaptation view. "The 'sociality view' emphasizes the rich social content of nostalgia, whereas the 'maladaptation view' holds that nostalgia is a sign of emotional instability and depression" (p. 908). Holbrook (1993) found that the roles of age and lifestyle were important factors in determining an individual's likeliness to experience nostalgia.

Previous experience with an aforementioned object, such as a brand, increases nostalgic recollection for the given brand (Shields & Johnson, 2016). Routledge et al. (2008) found that an individual's view on mortality impacted his or her proneness to nostalgia. Individuals who are more prone to nostalgia perceive life to be more meaningful. Meyers (2009) attaches nostalgia to not only an emotional state of preference, but as a "defense mechanism that characterizes people who are going through transitions related to their age, residence, or occupation" (p. 738). This could be induced by a number of factors, including the death of a loved one, disruption to employment, moving from a place of residence, elimination of a familiar social or entertainment location, or the demise of a favorite brand or media program. Nostalgia serves as a buffer to these various existential threats (Juhl, Routledge, Arndt, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2010). By revisiting a nostalgic memory through a person, location, occasion, or object, the individual can limit his or her sense of loss (Holak & Havlena, 1998).

Baker and Kennedy have proposed that the more turmoil that exists in an individual's life, the more nostalgic reflection will occur. Also, the more dissatisfied an individual is with his or her current state, the more likely they are to reflect on the past, and that the intensity of the nostalgic resonance will be greatest when there is direct involvement with the past period yearned for. Scholars have argued that nostalgia represents an inability to move forward and appreciate the present, to acknowledge the loss of the past, or accept one's present reality (Kaplan, 1987; Köneke, 2010; Werman, 1977; Zinchenko, 2011).

While Davis found that men tended to be more nostalgic than women, Sherman and Newman (1977) uncovered that there was no difference in proneness to nostalgia between genders. Although Holbrook noted that middle-aged persons carry much of the culture that was most relevant to the them during their teens, even those individuals who are of comparable ages

may not show equal propensity toward nostalgic associations of that shared time period. Also, nostalgia has been found to afflict any individual, regardless of social class, ethnicity, or other demographic (Sedikides et al., 2004). Finally, although highly individual in terms of specific cues that prompt nostalgia, it is also present in the collective. Brown and Humphreys (2002) found that shared heritage and memories with group members can induce nostalgia, leading to nostalgia being used as a way to bond with others through shared experiences (Sierra & McQuitty, 2007).

Categories of Nostalgia

A number of scholars have delineated different categories of nostalgia (Havlena & Holak, 1991; Hirsch, 1992; Holak & Havlena, 1992; Stern, 1992; Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Batcho, 1995). For the purpose of understanding the ways in which nostalgia manifests for individuals, the following section will present categories of nostalgia that have been explored in previous literature.

Personal

Stern (1992) suggested that nostalgia operates in two divisions: personal and historical. Personal nostalgia, or "the way I was" (p. 16), is a preference for the objects, media, and identity that one had personally experienced. The personal past is reconstructed to the desires of the individual, usually to associations of childhood. These recollections do not necessarily have to rely on any actualities of experiencing pleasantness is childhood, only on the reconstructed idealized visions of the experience. As Baker and Kennedy found, these recollections tend to be embellished in their reconstructions. Many times, reconstructed memories of the home serves as a source of security, love, and tenderness, with characters in this reconstruction being familiar and recognizable people from the individual's past. Reliance on personal nostalgia allows for

the individual to reinterpret events from the past that may have been negative and sanitize those events in order to yield pleasure or to learn from the specific memory.

Historical

Historical nostalgia, or "the way it was" (p. 13), appeals to the individual's desire to associate with a past era perceived as desirable, such as a desire to return to the fashions of past decades in which one may not have ever lived in. This form of nostalgia is a reaction against an individual's contemporary life, whether due to the cultural, political, or economic climate. A past era is viewed as superior in one or numerous respects to the current period. This past era is before the individual was born. Like personal nostalgia, these representations are fictionalized and do not represent history, but rather cherry-picked idealizations. Nostalgia for these eras need not be limited to a singular year, decade, or century, as the individual may incorporate numerous eras into one reconstructed, historical setting. Many times, historical nostalgia is represented through the creation of a golden age, one that seems familiar, but that did not exist as represented by the sanitized fantasy, since negative associations are usually removed and not recreated. Merchant and Rose (2013) also call this form of the phenomenon "vicarious nostalgia" (p. 2619).

Real

Baker and Kennedy (1994) advanced three categories of nostalgia: real, simulated, and collective. Real nostalgia encompasses associations that were directly experienced by the individual, such as hearing a song that was popular in one's teenage years that conjures specific recollections or feelings. This type of nostalgia occurs when the person had directly experienced the stimulus or cue in his or her own past. Objects that can induce real nostalgia include recovering a toy from childhood, viewing a photograph from the individual's high school graduation, or participating in an event that was formidable in one's direct past. The concept of

authenticity is central to real nostalgia, in that direct experience provides a frame of reference for understanding the nostalgic experience. Real nostalgia essentially serves as a synonym for Stern's personal nostalgia.

Simulated

Simulated nostalgia concerns associations that are representative of a time period in which the individual did not directly experience. For example, a person born in 2004 may hold an affinity toward a certain decade in which they did not live through, such as the 1960s. This may be influenced through the music, cinema, literature, or any other artifact in which the individual may have encountered. The individual may have been exposed to these artifacts through media or through another individual who did have direct experience with the time period that is being romanticized, such as a relative. Generally, there is a bittersweet feeling to these reconstructions, as these reconstructions do not reflect direct experiences in which to reference. This form of nostalgia is related to historical nostalgia, but not a direct synonym, as there is usually an indirect experience of the period through an intermediate cultural artifact from the period, while historical nostalgia is based purely on fantastical reconstructions of the period without any direct or even indirect personal experience.

Collective

Collective nostalgia is characterized by symbols that represent a culture, nation, or generation. Rather than being a personal reconstruction, it is a reconstruction crafted by members of the culture as a unit. This may be most evident through the physical products and reproductions that exist to signify a decade (Belk, 1990). For example, those born between 1946 and 1964, or more commonly referred to as baby boomers (Russell, 2015), would collectively accept certain elements of popular culture, such as The Beach Boys, *Bewitched*, and the 1965

Mustang as being representative or symbolic of their generation, while millennials, or those born between 1982 and 2000 (Shapero, 2013), would collectively accept *Full House*, the Spice Girls, and Pokémon trading cards as nostalgic symbols of their generation.

Anticipatory

According to Batcho and Shikh (2016), anticipatory "involves missing what has not yet been lost. Triggered by an imagined future, anticipatory nostalgia entails a conflict between an actual present and a hypothetical future one" (p. 75). Similar to other forms of nostalgia, this category is also used as a defense mechanism to deal with an upcoming change in the individual's present situation. Those who experience anticipatory nostalgia tend to have a stronger desire for belonging and a tendency toward melancholy. However, the individual does not necessarily hold a negative view of the present or future; just that he or she does not want to let go of the present. An example is a senior in college who is graduating and moving away from the close friends that she has made. She may be nostalgic for the present, and in turn, be more appreciative of it knowing that her future life will be radically different from her present.

Consumed

Cross (2015) proposes that the emotional state of nostalgia in today's age of fast capitalism is not about a specific time period, but a yearning for the *products* that symbolize a previous identity or time period. Referring to this idea, Cross states that "modern fast capitalism meant fast consumption, a particular intensive form of commodity culture, entailing the increasingly rapid pace of production and purchase, creating profit through the fast turnaround of investment" (p. 12). As products became more aligned with identity, and when those products disappeared, an individual's identity was threatened. As consumed nostalgia, this concept is "less about preserving an 'unchanging golden era' than it is about capturing the fleeting and the

particular in its 'authenticity'" (p. 15). Nostalgia assists in an individual's ability to cope with the relentless passing of time by letting one return to childhood, adolescence, or a similarly stable state. It is during these times where emerging autonomy, emotionally supported peer circles, and increased consumer freedom reigned supreme for many individuals. The ultimate goal of consumed nostalgia is to collect personal remembrances and to find communication with those who share those memories. Essentially, being able to return home through consumption.

Nostalgia as an Appeal in Tourism

With a thorough understanding of how scholars define, categorize, and conceptualize nostalgia, it is important to explore how it has been incorporated into the field of tourism to attract visitors to a host of destinations, including theme parks.

Nostalgia has been shown to be a driving factor in attracting tourists to various destinations. Tourists who pursue an interest in the past, whether desiring to know more about familial heritage or world history, find themselves induced to travel (Marschall, 2012). For those travelers who are driven by nostalgia, heritage tourism sites, such as Gettysburg National Military Park, Plimouth Plantation, and Colonial Williamsburg, are popular destinations. Also appealing may be personal memory tourism sites, or those destinations that have a personal meaning to the tourist because of the role the site played in his or her life. Examples include a childhood home, a school, a relative's house, or any other location that housed significant moments in the individual's life. This can be a very fulfilling, while also emotionally-charged endeavor.

Those who desire to escape from their perceived mundane, daily routines of life may look for nostalgic experiences in which to fulfill the desire to breakaway from the ordinary for a short period of time (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Osbaldiston (2012) uncovered that using nostalgia in

order to escape leads tourists to desire authentic cultural experiences, some of which are to sites such as ancient ruins and heritage tourism sites. Although escapism has been found to be an influence in these motivations, historical nostalgia also plays a part for certain tourists who desire to see a representation of an admired culture during a romanticized period of its history. In their study of tourism to Macau, Leong and colleagues (2015) found that nostalgia was a supportive element in enticing individuals to visit heritage destinations in order to build stronger bonds with friends and family members, and thus, strengthening loyalty to the destination. Also, those who view a destination as part of one's own heritage will engage in different behaviors and feelings, generally those that are more positive (Poria et al., 2003).

Relying on nostalgia as an appeal to attract visitors can have its caveats. Like any other entity designed to evoke nostalgia, a destination relying on nostalgic associations does not represent history as fact, but rather as "fantasies of a world that never was" (Hewison, 1987, p. 10). Marketing efforts used by the operators of these sites look to evoke anxiety about the present day in order to attract visitors to their version of the past. In their study on understanding the experience of traveling on Route 66 as a heritage tourism site, Caton and Santos (2007) discuss nostalgia as a motivational factor for visiting certain destinations. The authors note that by using nostalgia to represent history, only one interpretation of history exists and is "out there waiting to be discovered" (p. 372). Also, there is an implication that the world is viewed in absolute terms, meaning that the present is viewed negatively while the past is viewed positively – individual does not have the ability or opportunity to adjudicate certain aspects of each or find pleasing or negative aspects to one, the other, both, or neither. Finally, operators of these destinations are not actually looking to educate, but only to pander to "what they want to see" (Dann, 1996, p. 220). However, as Marschall notes, tourists have their own standard in which to

authenticate sites, so even if these sites served more dynamic purposes, it may not fulfill the desires of what tourists wish to experience while traveling.

Locations that depend on the ephemeral may find the appreciation for that cultural artifact slips away as certain age groups begin to whither. Film-induced tourist sites, destinations that are notable for serving as settings in films and television programs, are susceptible to this progression (Alderman et al., 2012; Benjamin et al., 2012). Examining the town of Mount Airy, North Carolina, which is known for inspiring the fictional town of Mayberry in *The Andy Griffith Show*, Benjamin et al. (2012) and Alderman et al. (2012) question the sustainability of a community based on a fictional town that served as the setting of a program that ceased its original run on television nearly fifty years ago. Although storefronts, architecture, and various events that the community sponsors are designed to evoke the nostalgic feel of a small, Southern town, the authors note that in doing this, certain resident populations become alienated, specifically members of the African-American population, many of whom would not care to remember those antiquated days (Benjamin, Kline, Alderman, & Hoggard, 2016; Benjamin et al., 2012). Echoing those statements, Marschall (2012) states, "destinations 'use' tourists as audience to portray preferred interpretations of their history and desirable images of their values and culture, especially in situations of contention over the past" (p. 326). However, the author goes on to note that "tourism can be used by minority groups and underprivileged sectors of the population to showcase suppressed memories and neglected historical sites associated with under-represented narratives of oppression and resistance" (p. 326).

With the top 10 theme parks worldwide welcoming almost 440 million people in 2016, it's no surprise that these sites have received much attention from academia (Themed Entertainment Association, 2017). Cross and Walton (2005) provide a thorough history and

critique of the demise of the urban and seaside amusement park and the ascent of today's modern theme park. The rise of the theme park served as a reaction to the decline of the urban and seaside amusement parks of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Instead of focusing on the grotesque ambiance (e.g., freak shows, oddities, and the strange) so imbued in locations like Luna Park at Coney Island, the theme park provided guests an opportunity to retreat into a fantastical world built on the familiar associations of childhood. This was not necessarily a childhood remembered, but a childhood filtered and idealized. The theme park also served as remonstration against the estrangement of urban living, as well as the stretch of suburbia, so both the population shifts of the cities as well as the isolation of suburban life, creating romanticized locations filled with friendly neighbors and sanitized streets (King & O'Boyle, 2011). Gone were the bustling, but quaint, downtown stores – replaced with sprawling shopping malls, lacking the personal nature of what was remembered (Brode, 2011). These parks, through attractions, architectural structures, and interactions, were reflective of a collective, middle-class memory of these previous incarnations. The historical backgrounds, locations, and time periods that existed in a child's act of play served as familiar backdrops that evoked the memories of the adults, while fulfilling the fantastical desires of the child (Cross, 2015). From this creation a tightly focused narrative is created in order to advance a desired vision of society, one that comes from the echoes of memory.

While carved out of the traditional amusement parks of the early twentieth century, Disneyland, considered to be the world's first theme park, was created as the antithesis of the Coney Island theme parks of the bizarre and grotesque (Kasson, 1978). Rather than appealing to the novelty of the era's present age as most amusement parks had done, Disneyland was conceived as a celebration of a nostalgic past and a hopeful future as seen through the wide-eyes

of a Midwestern boy. In its creation, the park codified forms of happiness based on the premises of placing the guest into a cinematic fantasy, generating joy around the child and the child-like, and moderately replacing the desire for novelty with the comfort of nostalgia (Cross & Walton, 2005). As Lindgren, Sparrman, Samuelsson, and Cardell (2015) conclude, a theme park "is a place where fiction *and* childhood are enacted in multiple interpersonal and personal-material relationships when real childhoods (visiting children) and fictive real childhoods (childhoods in fiction) meet and coexist" (p. 182).

Although theme parks have been seen as providing a snapshot of American capitalist culture, this is not always a welcomed or wanted experience, as these destinations have not been without their detractors in scholarship (Klugman, 1995; Kuenz, 1995; Waldrep, 1995; Wasko, 2001; Willis, 1995a; Willis, 1995b). Kuenz (1995) views theme parks as consumption-driven sites used to further American ideals of capitalism, imperialism, and oppression. Through controlled, prepackaged experiences, the only purpose of these sites is to conjure nostalgic feelings for times that were riddled with turmoil and were not reflective of the social, economic, and cultural underpinnings of the represented fantasized eras (Klugman, 1995). This serves as a façade to encourage a continuously consuming culture. These skewed renderings of history serve to confirm American bourgeois identity, elicit false senses of security, and confirm that progress is only measurable through consumption (Willis, 1995b). At the same time, these parks exclude oppressed groups through the demonization of sexuality, manipulation of memory, propagation of conservative ideology, and suppression of original thought (Waldrep, 1995). Although visitors are looking to escape the present, they are unknowingly 'feeding the beast' that creates the daily pressures that an individual endures. These scholars paint a rather grim picture of the motivations for operating theme parks and construct the visitor as nothing more than a

brainwashed sheep – or the audio-animatronics featured in the attractions – to be herded by an all-powerful corporate machine (Wasko, 2001).

Dollywood

Disneyland was designed to be more than just a place of amusement – it was designed to uphold the romanticized dreams and goals that its creator, Walt Disney, held onto throughout his childhood and into his adult years (Cross & Walton, 2005). As Disney had set the standard for successful theme park operation, an icon of country music stated that she wanted to be "a female Walt Disney" (Miller, 2015, p. 228) and create a fantasy world dedicated to her home. Dolly Parton lent her story, one chronicling a rags-to-riches climb to the top of the country music world and a hope for all to achieve their dreams, to the theme park industry with the opening of Dollywood in 1986. However, the genesis of Dollywood began long before Parton would become an international superstar.

With the country's fascination in the tall tales of the American West in full swing in the 1950s, Grover Robbins, Jr. purchased the Tweetsie railroad engine from Gene Autry. Robbins desired to bring the train back to where it had originally operated from 1881 to 1950, on a small rail line between Johnson City, Tennessee and Boone, North Carolina. On Independence Day of 1957, Tweetsie Junction welcomed its first guests. The attraction featured a train ride circling Roundhouse Mountain, complete with a hijacking by actors portraying vandals and the indigenous population, along with a saloon, bank, general store, and other familiar symbols of the romanticized American Old West (Hollis, 2007).

Looking to duplicate its success, Grover Robbins, Jr. and his brothers, Spencer and Harry, identified Pigeon Forge, Tennessee as the location for their next venture. With centennial observances of the Civil War occurring throughout the South, the brothers felt that a Civil War-

themed railroad park would be most fitting, and opened Rebel Railroad in 1961. Essentially a twin-sister park to Tweetsie Junction, Rebel Railroad featured a train ride through the Smoky Mountains. The train would come under attack by actors portraying Union soldiers, only to be defeated by an arriving Confederate brigade. Rebeltown, the village created within the park, featured a saloon, blacksmith, general store, and other similar romanticized staples. In 1964, the park would undergo a minor transformation and adopt an American pioneer theme. After the end of the 1964-1965 World's Fair in New York, Rebel Railroad acquired the log flume ride that had been operating, in order to shift its focus to a ride-centered park. After the death of Grover Robbins, Jr. in 1970, Art Modell, owner of the Cleveland Browns National Football League team, bought the park and renamed it Goldrush Junction. Looking to appeal to the heritage of the area, a sawmill and woodshop were built to reference the timber industry that operated in the area. Smaller rides for families, a campsite, an outdoor theater, and a small church were also introduced (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017).

Jack and Pete Herschend, creators of a theme park in Branson, Missouri known as Silver Dollar City, decided to enter the Pigeon Forge area. Instead of creating a brand new park, the Herschend brothers bought Goldrush Junction in 1977. After one season as New Goldrush, the park became known as Silver Dollar City, Tennessee. As chronicled on Dollywood's website:

> Intent upon showcasing the craftsmanship of the Smoky Mountain region, guests entered near the park's train trestle, passed under the train tracks and entered Craftsman's Valley. The area was filled with talented artisans including blacksmiths, wood carvers, leather smiths and lye soap makers who showcased their crafts while demonstrating their trades. The park experienced significant growth over the next decade of operation including the addition of rides, shops, more craftsmen, shows and attractions like the Silver Dollar

> Grist Mill which was completed in 1983 and became the first working grist mill built in Tennessee in more than 100 years (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017).

One of the first new attractions to be introduced to Silver Dollar City, Tennessee was the Flooded Mine, a dark ride reminiscent of Pirates of the Caribbean at Disneyland and Walt Disney World. This helped to expand the park beyond Craftsman's Valley and the train offerings in order to attract the family vacationing unit.

By the early 1980s, Silver Dollar City, Tennessee had become a favorite of Dolly Parton to bring her nieces and nephews. Also, encouraged by Conway Twitty's Twitty City and Johnny Cash's House of Cash museum, Dolly Parton sought to create a location that would be dedicated to the home that she knew and remembered. She had always been inspired by the magical world that was represented when the carnival would come to town, and in Dolly's words, "I'm always talking about how proud I am of the Smoky Mountains, so this is just something I felt real compelled to do. As Mamma would say, 'I felt led to do it'" (Miller, 2015, p. 223). Going beyond her life story, she also wanted a place that would highlight mountain culture, challenging the tired tropes of Hillbilly culture, and instead, showcasing "skillbillies" (Miller, 2015, p. 223), or those artisans practicing such crafts as dulcimer making, blacksmithing, quilting, loom-weaving, leatherworking, glassblowing, and a host of other traditional handcrafts. The Herschend family, seeing the opportunity to enhance their current site by infusing the creative ideas of an internationally acclaimed country artist, as well as understanding that Dolly's venture would be a tough entity to compete against, approached Parton about a partnership to turn Silver Dollar City, Tennessee into Dolly's vision. In 1986, Silver Dollar City, Tennessee became Dollywood, also known as "the friendliest city in the Smokies" (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017).

Affectionately (or condescendingly, depending on one's interpretation), Dollywood is described as the "Redneck Disneyland" of theme parks (Morales, 2014, p. 129). Catering to a regional audience of the American Deep South – the destination touts that it is within a day's drive of two-thirds of the U.S. population east of the Mississippi River – the theme park averages almost three million visitors per year (Plautz, 2015), with an aggressive strategy to average five million visitors in the coming years (Fridgen, 2015). Compared to the approximately 81.1 million guests who visited the Disney theme parks in the United States in 2016 (Themed Entertainment Association, 2017), Dollywood's targeting efforts are focused on a regional audience compared to a national audience. The targeted regional audience draw is reflected in the attractions, entertainment, amenities, and theming found in the park. Although certain motivations, such as distance or economical concerns, may appeal to visitors of Dollywood over Walt Disney World or Disneyland, there exists an emotional, nostalgic parallel between the two companies that is overlooked by academics. As mentioned previously, although the popular press has presented numerous features on the park and ample critique, academic research has mostly focused on Dolly Parton as a cultural icon (Hubbs, 2015; Hoppe, 2017; Morales, 2014), with Dollywood being only one part of Dolly's celebrity intrigue. Scholarly research that focuses directly on Dollywood is almost non-existent.

Fletchall's (2013) study identifies five categories that businesses use in order to attract consumers to their establishments in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. These five categories are Southern, Country, Fifties, Mountains, and Appalachia. Although her study was based on other attractions located in city, all five of these categories are represented in some form at Dollywood. Although Dollywood's celebration of cultural heritage is narrowed to a specific region of the United States, it does not differ from the Disney theme parks in terms of the approach taken to

evoke that nostalgia, which is recreated through cultural artifacts. As Morales (2014) suggests, Dollywood celebrates the natural beauty of the Smoky Mountains, the can-do attitude of the rural family, and a genuine love of America. Dollywood presents a chance to take part in a story that is presented through the lens of Appalachian heritage. The destination is able to tell stories, but just from a different set of fairytales than those stories represented at the Disney theme parks.

A Brief Tour of Dollywood

This section provides an insight into the attractions and entertainment that appear at Dollywood. As of 2018, Dollywood features ten different themed zones celebrating the culture of Appalachian Tennessee, and specifically, the Smoky Mountains that Dolly Parton was raised in. The park's main entrance on Showstreet serves as the start of the guest's excursion into Dollywood. Aligned with Victorian-styled buildings, Showstreet creates an aura of affluence. As Fridgen states, "the hillbillies live somewhere else, as Showstreet is home to shop owners and probably the kids that picked on Dolly when she wore her coat of many colors. In Dolly's world, this is where the rich folks lived. But don't fret about that now because all park employees, your hosts, are friendly and welcoming" (p. 92). This area of the park is home to the Southern Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame and Museum, the Showstreet Palace Theater, and Dolly Parton's Celebrity Theater. Entertainment offered at these locations changes periodically, but a mainstay includes The Kingdom Heirs, a gospel quartet that has been performing at the park since the Silver Dollar City, Tennessee era.

Home to three attractions, Adventures in Imagination is the section of the park dedicated to Dolly Parton's career. Built in 1996, this area was originally themed after Hollywood, but was later changed in order to reflect Parton's influence and career. The Chasing Rainbows museum contains numerous dresses, awards, costumes, artifacts, and interactive experiences

direct from Dolly herself. Dolly's Home-on-Wheels is Parton's actual tour bus where visitors are allowed to board and learn more about her life on the road. Finally, the Dreamsong Theater hosts the show *My People,* featuring Dolly's "brother Randy along with several other family members who share songs of the family's strong faith, their deep love for the Smoky Mountains and their steadfast belief in their sister Dolly" (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017).

Jukebox Junction is an idealized recreation of Sevierville, Tennessee in the 1950s. Complete with drive-in diner, period-themed vehicles, and attractions that glorify the period, Jukebox Junction encompasses the artifacts of the 1950s that Fletchall identified throughout the rest of Pigeon Forge. Rockin' Roadway puts riders at the wheel of a 1950s Corvette, Thunderbird, or Cadillac, driving "down a country road set in the 1950s where classic Burma-Shave billboards dot the landscape" (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017). Lightning Rod, one of the park's newest attractions that debuted in 2016, is a 20-story, 1500 horsepower-driven, wooden rollercoaster that reaches a top speed of 73 miles per hour and contains 12 "significant airtime moments" (Harrington, 2015). Finally, The Pines Theater is home to *Dreamland Drive-In*, a production told through the music of the 1950s and 1960s highlighting a group of teenagers as they come of age during that era.

If Showstreet is the avenue of the affluent, then Rivertown Junction is Dolly's childhood neighborhood, complete with a replica of the two-room cabin in Locust Ridge that she called home. Dollywood's official website summarizes the sentiment of this attraction perfectly, "Though it lacked electricity and running water, love was abundant in this tiny little mountain house that Dolly and her family called home" (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017). This section also features Smoky Mountain River Rampage, a white water rafting attraction.

Continuing through this area of the park, guests enter The Village, where the park was initially created as Rebel Railroad. It is actually the only land in the park that has been part of each previous version of the park (Fridgen, 2015). Now, the Dollywood Express takes guests through the foothills of the Smoky Mountains, but without any staged ambushes. The Village is home to the Village Carousel, in which riders can choose from 60 animal-shaped vehicles as the calliope music plays above. Also, the Heartsong Theater, a nature-immersed playhouse, features *Heartsong: The Movie*, a film that highlights the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains (Dollywood Show Schedule, 2017).

Reminiscent of the fairs that Dolly had enjoyed as a child (Parton, 1994), Country Fair features many attractions one would encounter at typical festivals. Some of the attractions include merry-go-round-type rides for children including Lucky Ducky, Amazing Flying Elephants, and Busy Bees. For taller riders, there is the Demolition Derby bumper cars, the Dizzy Disk, the Shooting Star, and the Waltzing Swinger.

Owens Farm serves as a nod to the agricultural endeavors of Appalachian heritage. Although a relatively small area of the park, it includes a play area for children called Lil' Pilots Playground, the toboggan-style Mountain Slidewinder, and the Barnstormer, which is a pneumatically powered pendulum ride.

One of the aspects that Parton most appreciated about Silver Dollar City, Tennessee was its commitment to the heritage and culture of the park. As she stated, "In my early days, I thought if I do get successful, I want to come back here and build something special to honor my parents and my people" (Hoppe, 2017, p. 58). Craftsman's Valley serves as the culmination of her desire to honor the traditions of Appalachian craftsmanship. This stretch of land hosts local blacksmiths, soap makers, leathersmiths, glass blowers, wood carvers, potters, and candy

makers. These craftspeople do not play the parts of artisans; they are highly skilled artisans invited to the park to make their living. As Miller (2015, p. 223-224) describes, "Dollywood has subsequently pursued a policy of research, something with the use of scouts, to find people who still possess these traditional skills and find a place for them. In this way the park has helped to maintain and preserve crafts which might have otherwise have died out." In Hoppe's discussion with one of the glassblowers at the park, the artisan stated, "This is one of the only places I know of where I can make a good salary blowing glass" (p. 57).

Not only does the Craftsman's Valley section of the park highlight the beautiful crafts of the region, but it also assists in the natural conservation efforts of the locality. As host to the Eagle Mountain Sanctuary, Dollywood has partnered with the American Eagle Foundation to care for and rehabilitate eagles that have been injured. These eagles are housed in a 30,000-square foot aviary, which is the largest aviary in the world for non-releasable bald eagles (Fridgen, 2015).

Craftsman's Valley also has its fair share of attractions and entertainment. *Wings of America Show Birds* educates audiences about some of the raptors that are cared for by the American Eagle Foundation. Blazing Fury, the park's signature dark ride, recounts the story of an out-of-control fire tearing through a small mountain town. Daredevil Falls, which opened in 1998, features a log flume ride through an abandoned logging camp, culminating with a 64-foot, 50 mile-per-hour plunge (Travel Advisory, 1998). Tennessee Tornado, debuting in 1999 as one of Dollywood's first expansion roller coasters, features a 128-foot drop at nearly 70 miles per hour through an old Tennessee mining company (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017). The Valley Theater hosts *Country Crossroads*, a show dedicated to classic and contemporary country music.

With a feeling reminiscent of the great national parks, Wilderness Pass is one of the newer areas of the park, and contains two of its most thrilling rollercoasters (Fridgen, 2015). The FireChaser Express is a dual-launch family coaster, the first in the United States, themed to saving the Smoky Mountains by "tame[ing] nature's fury and preserve[ing] the Smokies for generations to come" (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017). Wild Eagle is a 21-story rollercoaster designed to give riders the feeling that they are flying over the Smoky Mountains.

Finally, Timber Canyon is the park's nod to the timber industry that was so vibrant in East Tennessee. This area features numerous thrill rides including the 100-foot drop and 50-mile per hour Thunderhead, the 20-story free-fall Drop Line, and Mystery Mine, which includes a 95-degree, 85-foot vertical drop. For those not as daring, there is the Whistle Punk Chaser junior rollercoaster and the Lumberjack Lifts.

The park includes a dynamic lineup of events and entertainment throughout the year, with 2018 being acclaimed the "Season of Showstoppers" (Roberts, 2018). In the early spring the park opens with Festival of Nations, which features performers and cuisine from all over the world. 2018 will feature performers from Spain, South Africa, Ecuador, Russia, Ireland, Germany, and Trinidad and Tobago (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017). Later in the spring, Dollywood will debut the Spring Mix Music Series. Performances by Amy Grant, Crystal Gale, the Marshall Tucker Band, and a host of others highlight this part of the season (Tuttle, 2017). During the early summer, the park holds Barbecue & Bluegrass presented by Bush's Best, highlighting award-winning barbecue chefs and bluegrass performances. Once that event concludes, Summer Celebration begins, with special performances by DRUMline Live, iLuminate, and Paint Jam for 2018 (Ramey, 2017). For October, the park will host the Harvest Festival presented by Humana. This festival features three main events. The Great Pumpkin

LumiNights features jack-o-lantern sculptures and family fun for Halloween (Dollywood, 2017). The Southern Gospel Jubilee welcomes many of the top names in southern gospel music to perform for guests. Finally, visiting artists from around the country are welcomed to Dollywood to showcase their crafts, expanding the offerings of Craftsman's Valley, while providing unique wares for guests to purchase. The park's operating season concludes with Dollywood's Smoky Mountain Christmas presented by Humana. This festival features specially themed Christmas entertainment including a musical version of *It's a Wonderful Life,* the Parade of Many Colors, and unique shows like *Christmas in the Smokies*, *Appalachian Christmas, 'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, and *O'Holy Night*. Guests have the opportunity to visit with Santa Claus at Santa Land, and meet Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and his friends at Holly Jolly Junction, all while experiencing the glow of over four million Christmas lights adorning the buildings of the park (Herschend Family Entertainment, 2017).

As part of the larger resort, Dollywood also operates Splash Country, which is themed after the rivers and swimming holes that Parton would play in as a child, and the 300-room DreamMore Resort and Spa (Jones, 2017). Dollywood offers over 100 cabins for guests to choose from as accommodations as well. Finally, the resort operates two dinner shows in Pigeon Forge, Dolly Parton's Stampede and Smoky Mountain Adventures (Fridgen, 2015).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the methodological approach taken to understand the role of nostalgia in the experience of guests to Dollywood. As the purpose of this study is to understand the nostalgic lived experience of visiting Dollywood, a qualitative approach is most appropriate. As defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2011):

> Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representation, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (p. 3).

As illustrated in the previous quote, uncovering meaning is the essential concern of the qualitative researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In qualitative methodologies, reality is not fixed, but is ever-changing and complex (Glesne, 1999). Unlike positivist approaches, the purpose of qualitative research is not to test a hypothesis, but to "describe, analyze, and interpret the constructive aspects of the social world" (McLeod, 2001, p. 133). The qualitative researcher is interested in the performances and the practices of the individual, meaning uncovering the qualities beyond mere messages or transports of information (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). However, there are a variety of manners in which to approach qualitative research (Goodall, 2000). For the purposes of this study, hermeneutic phenomenology was deemed the most appropriate in order to uncover the lived of experience of nostalgia encountered for guests to

Dollywood. The following section provides an overview of hermeneutic phenomenology and its appropriateness for this study.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Interpreting Cohen, Mannion, and Morrison (2007), Sloan and Bowe (2014) define phenomenology in its broadest understanding as "a theoretical point of view advocating the study of individuals' experiences because human behavior is determined by the phenomena of experience rather than objective, physically described reality that is external to the individual" (p. 1292). Phenomenology relies on text as the cornerstone of evoking meaning from an experience (Ferch, 2000). However, the ways in which meaning is analyzed and reported creates different forms of phenomenology: descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology.

Edmund Husserl's phenomenology grew out of a response to the positivist dominance in scholarly research. This form of phenomenology is known as descriptive, or transcendental, phenomenology. Through this approach, Husserl posited that knowledge could be uncovered through the understanding of how individuals experience and consciously interpret objects (Spinelli, 2005). As Sloan and Bowe note, "Husserl's descriptive or transcendental phenomenology was so called because the observer could transcend the phenomena and meanings being investigated to take a global view of the essences discovered; i.e. settling for generic descriptions of the essences and phenomena without moving to a 'fine-grained' view of the essences and phenomena under investigation" (p. 1294). However, this form of phenomenology still retains certain positivistic characters, in that reality still has a singular, objective standard (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The goal of studies following Husserl's approach was generic description of the phenomena under investigation. Furthermore in Husserl's approach, the researcher separates him- or herself from the phenomena in order to get

to the essence of the phenomena. This is done through bracketing, which is the practice of identifying and separating all previous biases that the researcher holds in order to get to the essence of the phenomena.

However, Gurwitsch (1979) acknowledges that the act of taking part in any activity, such as research, illustrates a violation of objectivity:

> Living in the world of daily experience, I am normally not a disinterested observer, still less a theoretician, but rather an actor who pursues certain aims and goals and tries to accomplish his objectives. The world in which I find myself is not given to me, at least not primarily, as a field of observation that I survey in an attitude of neutrality. On the contrary, in my very pursuing my goals and objectives I am involved in whatever interests I have to further. Because of this involvement, I do not simply belong to society at large, I occupy a certain place and position within it as a member of the profession I have chosen, of the subgroup into which I was born, and so forth. The vantage point of my position within society is the result of the whole history of my life. It is due to the circumstances, partly imposed on me, partly chosen by me, which in the course of my personal history have contributed toward making me become what I am (p.121).

The subject a researcher chooses to investigate, the methods used, the notion of what is privileged and what is seen as unnecessary, constitute non-neutrality. As Spence (2017) states, "Furthermore, because we make differential judgments about the importance or relevance of the feelings we experience, our emotions incorporate a sense of what is important to us. Thus there is always a connection between feeling and judgment" (p. 838). This view is born out of hermeneutic phenomenology, also known as interpretive or existential phenomenology.

Heidegger is considered the creator of hermeneutic phenomenology (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). It was Heidegger's view that a researcher could never separate him- or herself from the phenomenon and that bracketing was impossible (Landridge, 2007). Hermeneutic phenomenology is generally considered more complex than descriptive phenomenology. Texts are still at the heart of understanding lived experience, and the analysis of these texts, such as transcripts of spoken accounts of experience, reveals deeper understanding of the meanings in which individuals interact with a phenomenon. Also, a formalized criteria of analysis is generally avoided in hermeneutic phenomenology so that the "context of the phenomenon itself can dictate how the data are analyzed" (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1296).

As Gadamer later developed, representation is only through language and language exists because of its use to represent the world (Landridge, 2007). In order to understand meaning, one must go beyond mere description and instead, identify themes that emerge from the text. Van Manen's hermeneutic approach builds on the philosophy of Gadamer through the hermeneutic circle, in which the researcher engages with parts of the text, then with his or her own understanding of the phenomenon, and then again with the whole of the text to interpret meanings that emerge from the text (Van Manen, 1997).

Pernecky and Jamal (2010) provide an example to illustrate the goals of descriptive phenomenology versus hermeneutic phenomenology. If a researcher were interested in studying hikers, the researcher following Husserl's descriptive phenomenological methodology would look to describe what is the essential experience of being a hiker. Another researcher, following Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, would try to uncover what it means to be a hiker. Both researchers would interpret the experience, but the descriptive phenomenological researcher would strive for objectivity and emotional distance in revealing the

essential, and somewhat standardized, structures of consciousness in the hiking experience. However, "the task of the hermeneutic phenomenology researcher is to put together the pieces in someone's understanding of an experience, to interpret and communicate the diverse relationships, meanings, and prejudices" (p. 1070). It is the role of the reader to interpret the researcher's situation and previous knowledge related to the phenomenon of interest means in the given context.

Criteria for a Strong Study Driven by Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Certain qualitative methodologies call for specific steps to be taken to ensure rigor. These steps may include triangulation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), member checks, trustworthiness (Guba, 1987), reflexivity (Creswell, 2007; Goodall, 2000; Landridge, 2007; Sloan & Bowe, 2014), and credibility (Patton, 1999; 2002). Triangulation, as explained by Lindlof and Taylor, is the process of comparing two or more forms of data collection regarding the phenomenon studied and determining if both forms of data collection lead to the same conclusion. This could be seen as a violation of the spirit of hermeneutic phenomenology, since there is the acknowledgment of a singular understanding of a given phenomenon that can be treated as the standard from which others can be judged against. Member checks also could potentially violate the spirit of hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology, as a proponent of multiple realities evidenced in a phenomenon, accepts that human understanding changes based on different interpretations, even done by the same individual (Crowther, Ironside, Spence, & Smythe, 2017; Gadamer, 1960/1975; Van Manen, 1997). Time and space impact how one views his or her experience with the experienced phenomenon, and with changes in time and space, an individual may adjust his or her interpretation of experiencing the phenomenon from one day to the next (Spence, 2017). As hermeneutic phenomenology is interested in understanding a given

phenomenon related to time and space, having participants go back and change their responses would violate that spirit. Crowther et al., (2017) posit hermeneutic phenomenology as:

> A methodological approach not bound by structured stages of a method; it is how one attunes, questions, and thinks in and through evolving methods. For this to occur, hermeneutic researchers adopt an attitude or stance that ponders unfolding and evolving questions allowing them to be surprised by how their thinking on phenomenon transforms over time (p. 827).

Therefore, the key element to judging the quality of a study driven by hermeneutic phenomenology is reflectivity.

Reflexivity is considered the most important element of a strong study based in hermeneutic phenomenology (Crowther et al., 2017; Goodall, 2000; Landridge, 2007; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). According to Goodall (2000, p. 137), "reflexivity refers to the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal the deep connections between the writer and her or his subjects." The researcher must turn back on his- or herself the lens in which he or she views the world. The researcher may, and should not be afraid to, allow his or her prior knowledge, background, or experience with the phenomena of interest influence the design of data gathering and analysis (Spence, 2017). The researcher will cull from prior experience and use empathy as an aid in the analysis of the data. Through this process, a richer understanding is co-constructed with the participant in the study (Van Manen, 1997). This is where hermeneutic phenomenology separates itself from descriptive phenomenology since the descriptive phenomenological methodology brackets out any influence the researcher may have on the study of the phenomenon of interest. In order to judge reflexivity, the reader should be moved compelled to think and to reinterpret the life experiences

described in the study through their own lens (Crowther et al., 2017). After engaging with the study, readers should be inspired to discover how their own lived experiences converge with that of the participants through the patterns and themes presented, causing empathy and moving them to their own self-discovery (Goodall, 2000). Denzin (1984, p. 9) does provide some key questions to assist in judging reflexivity and interpretive work, overall:

- Does the interpretation illuminate, disclose, and reveal the lived experience?
- Does the interpretation rest on thickly contextualized, thickly described materials and on concepts near to experience?
- Is the interpretation historically embedded and temporally grounded?
- Does the interpretation reflect the phenomenon as a process that is relational and interactive?
- Does the interpretation engulf what is known about the phenomenon?
- Does the interpretation incorporate prior understandings and interpretations (the investigator's and others', including emergent ones) as part of the final interpreted, understood structural totality?
- Does the interpretation cohere?
- Does the interpretation produce understanding; that is, do the elements that are interpreted coalesce into a meaningful whole?
- Is the interpretation unfinished? All interpretation is necessarily provisional and incomplete, to begin anew when the investigator returns to the phenomenon.

Purposely vague, these questions serve as a guide in order to provide some sort of criteria to judging interpretive studies. However, as Goodall points out, in true hermeneutic

phenomenological fashion, each judge will bring in his or her own biases when engaging with the text, which will impact how the research is read and interpreted.

Finally, credibility may be achieved through transparency of the research process (Patton, 1999; 2002). The researcher should keep detailed records of the steps taken to cull participants, craft data collection tools, and analyze the data (Van Manen, 1997). Also, if the researcher has previous understanding and knowledge of the studied phenomena, that should be disclosed, usually through a literature review (Crowther et al., 2017). Although other scholars have advocated against engaging with literature before conducting the study in order allow the phenomenon to emerge without bias (Tavallaei & Abu Talib, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), as the tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology propose, this is never truly possible. Therefore, the literature review not only acts as a means to become familiar with how to identify the possible emergence of phenomena, but as also a form of transparency and disclosure of the researcher's credibility in the research process (Crowther et al., 2017; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Spence, 2017).

Research Design

The present study sought to address the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do Season Passholders of Dollywood interpret their experiences of the theme park?
- RQ2: For Season Passholders, in what way does nostalgia play a role in the interpretation of the experience of visiting Dollywood?
- RQ3: How do these interpretations inform and build upon the concept of nostalgia?

In order to explore the phenomena at play uncovered through these questions, in-depth, individual interviews were conducted with seventeen individuals. The use of in-depth,

individual interviews is a common method employed in studies driven by hermeneutic phenomenology, as in-depth, individual interviews allow for participants to construct narratives that provide the avenues for the phenomena under investigation to be revealed (Ferch, 2000; Taylor et al., 1994). These interviews are designed to be "conversational in nature, recognize the role of researchers and participants as co-creators of meaning, and take cultivating participants' narrative activity as their primary goal" (Caton & Santon, 2007, p. 374).

Participant Selection and Participants

The goal of hermeneutic phenomenological research is not to apply elements of phenomena to an entire population, but to gain a greater insight into the phenomena under investigation. The sampling strategy for this study was purposeful, as it was critical for participants to have been guests of Dollywood. As Lindlof and Taylor (2011) note, it is important to have participants partake in the study who are most experienced with the context in which the phenomena occur. In this purposeful sampling strategy, selection criteria for eligible participants were established. For this study, it was essential for participants to be Dollywood Season Passholders. An individual who is a season passholder for the site has, generally, committed to visiting the park more than twice per year in order to have the pass be economically justified. For 2018, a basic Dollywood Season Pass is $109 compared to a single-day ticket at a price of $64 for individuals between the ages of 10 and 61. As a season pass holder, individuals are entitled to various benefits, including unlimited visitation to the park, exclusive ride times on select attractions, and a twenty percent discount on accommodations at the Dollywood Cabins. There are additional levels, Gold and Super Gold, which offer further privileges. Those who are passholders are considered to be more likely to experience Dollywood, attending the park multiple times over a one-year period. Therefore these

individuals would, generally, be familiar with the park and be able to discuss their lived experiences of being a visitor to Dollywood.

After the criterion had been set, numerous steps were taken to invite individuals to participate in the study. The first step involved a snowball sampling technique, in which initial familiar liaisons were presented the opportunity to participate (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). From there, these participants were asked to recommend additional individuals who fit the criteria for participation, who were then invited to partake in the study. From there, invitations to participate were posted on various social media sites related to Dollywood.

As Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 202) note, "In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units; thus redundancy is the primary criterion." Thematic redundancy was reached with participant fourteen. However, additional interviews were conducted to confirm that the sampling had indeed reached thematic saturation and to honor previous invitations.

The seventeen participants in the individual, in-depth interviews were between the ages of 21 and 67. Although certain scholars have stated that older individuals tend to hold more nostalgic preferences, other scholars have found that people of any age are prone to the effects of nostalgia, as discussed earlier in the study. Fourteen of the seventeen participants currently reside in towns and cities located in East Tennessee, while the three other participants reside in other states that are considered part of the South in the United States. Nine of the participants were male and eight of the participants were female. As the selection criteria dictated, all were Dollywood Season Passholders. The following table provides of summary of participant information.

Table 4.1 Summary of Participants

Pseudonym	Length of Interview	Current Location	Where Raised	Age
Michelle*	43:01	Knoxville, TN	Chattanooga, TN	23
Catherine	53:07	Knoxville, TN	Knoxville, TN	21
Rebecca	51:08	Knoxville, TN	Knoxville, TN	22
Thomas	28:52	Knoxville, TN	Chattanooga, TN	33
Dwight	46:09	Knoxville, TN	Johnson City, TN	52
Jacob	1:10:33	Knoxville, TN	Nashville, TN	44
Carter	35:51	Knoxville, TN	Knoxville, TN	21
Lesley	41:44	Sevierville, TN	Jackson, TN	46
Molly	36:22	Knoxville, TN	Pittsburgh, PA	30
Larry	2:02:53	Travelers Rest, SC	Jersey City, NJ	67
Bradley	42:08	Knoxville, TN	Pontotoc, MS	45
Gloria	1:09:23	Miami, FL	Miami, FL	26
Rhonda	1:15:57	Travelers Rest, SC	Jersey City, NJ	66
Sean	1:06:12	Knoxville, TN	Camden, TN	56
Reggie	22:54	Knoxville, TN	Knoxville, TN	51
Maggie	1:03:39	Knoxville, TN	Chicago, IL	42
Teresa	34:53	Chattanooga, TN	Enterprise, AL	36
Gerald	35:01	Knoxville, TN	Toledo, OH	54

* Indicates pre-test participant; data not included in study.

Data Collection Methods

As McCracken (1988) states, the "long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory and gives the researcher the opportunity to step into the mind of others, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (p. 9). Those who had accepted the invitations to participate in the study provided their contact information to the researcher. The researcher then contacted each participant to schedule an appropriate time and location to conduct the interview. The day before the interview, a message was sent to the participant in order to confirm the event. On the day of the interview, the participant was given an Informed Consent Statement to read and sign (see Appendix B for complete form). The researcher also went over the form with each participant to confirm that the participant understood the procedures of the interview. The researcher also emphasized to the participant that each interview would be audio recorded for which all participants agreed. Twelve of the interviews were done face-to-face with the participants in local establishments of the participant's choice. The five other interviews were conducted via telephone. For those who participated in the study via telephone, an Informed Consent Statement was sent to the participant the day of scheduling. Each participant was then required to send via electronic mail the Informed Consent Statement back to the researcher before the interview could take place.

Interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for flexibility based on responses. Yes-and-no questions and other single-word-response questions were avoided, as those types of questions do not elicit deep understanding of meaning. As Merriam (2009, p. 98) states, good interview questions are "those that are open-ended and yield descriptive and detailed data, even stories about the phenomenon." Through the format of the questions, narrative responses were

purposefully sought after. Crowther et al. (2017), interpreting the work of Van Manen, state that:

> The well-crafted phenomenological story is able to reveal ways of being, thinking, and acting in the world that shed light on what is known but covered over, or forgotten. Stories crafted in hermeneutic phenomenology are thus a provocative and powerful means of evoking shared pathic responses (Van Manen, 2014). They can communicate the way we humans make sense of events and relationships, both with ourselves and with others. In a story, we encounter ourselves in dialogue and experience ourselves in different ways (p. 827).

Narratives, or stories, serve as the channel for readers to engage the phenomena investigated in the study. This form of answering questions allows for rich description of the lived experience to manifest (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Also, participants delivering narratives believe their stories to be valued, and in sharing these stories, allow the researcher to provide insight and reveal the phenomena of interest. The following types of open-ended questions were posed to the participants:

- Tell me what it is like when you go to Dollywood.
- Tell me a little bit about what and how you feel when you are at Dollywood.
- Describe some of your most vivid memories of visiting Dollywood.
- Describe a time that something at Dollywood made you feel nostalgic.

Probing questions were used to further evoke more detailed responses, to clarify concepts that had arisen, and to delve deeper into certain key phrases that were uttered:

- What does that mean to you?
- In what way?

- How did that make you feel?
- Give me an example of...

The complete Interview Protocol can be viewed in Appendix C.

In order to assist participants in proper nomenclature and to jog their memories, photo elicitation was used in the form of park maps and show schedules. Harper (2002) defines photo elicitation as "the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview" (p. 13). By using visual cues, the researcher is able to stimulate dialogue with the participant and to unlock conversations that may have not come to the surface had the participant not been reminded of the attraction presented on the map or schedule (Matteucci, 2013). Each participant was provided a map of Dollywood from the fall of 2017, a show schedule from the summer of 2017, and a show schedule from 2016's Dollywood's Smoky Mountain Christmas presented by Humana. Those who interviewed via telephone were provided digital copies of these documents.

After the completion of each interview, the researcher asked the participant if he or she would be willing to contact his or her acquaintances that fit the research criteria regarding the research opportunity. Four of the participants in the study were found through this tactic. The researcher thanked the participant for their time, and then after the participant had left, drafted initial notes regarding the interview. All recorded interviews were then transcribed. After the completion of each transcription, the audio files were deleted from the researcher's secured computer. All transcripts were coded using a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

For analytical purposes, Van Manen's (1997) approach was utilized. After the completion of each transcription, the completed transcript was read several times in order to become familiar with the context of the transcript. Then the process of analysis occurred.

Narratives were combed for specific statements, phrases, and words that illuminated the lived experience of visiting Dollywood, with themes emerging from the text. Van Manen (1997) defines a theme as the "focus or point of a passage; articulating something particularly essential or revealing about the experience described" (p. 21). This initial round of analysis revealed twenty-five initial themes. As these themes were analyzed, those that revealed nostalgic associations related to the experience of visiting Dollywood were isolated into five categories.

Quality Assurance

The following is a reflexive exercise to ensure transparency in the study. The researcher has been fascinated in ways in which the past is represented through commercial branding, experience, and communication. As someone whose ephemeral interests lie in past artifacts of popular culture, the reason for individuals to look to the past intrigues him. Also, as someone who has been through disjointed life moments over the last few years, the researcher found himself relying on nostalgic associations. Therefore, it has become a scholarly pursuit of his to seek answers to these questions by understanding the lived experience of being nostalgic. Also, as a former marketing employee of a major theme park, he is drawn to how nostalgia is used to represent the past, the present, and even the future at these destinations. Being in close vicinity of Dollywood, he is a Super Gold Season Passholder of Dollywood. The researcher has immersed himself in its atmosphere to understand how this resort presents its representations of nostalgia and what meaning its guests derive from experiencing the park.

In terms of credibility, the necessary steps were taken to ensure confidentiality and secure record keeping for all participants in the study. As a third-year Ph.D. candidate, the researcher has taken three qualitative research doctoral classes, which afforded him the necessary skills to conduct in-depth, individual interviews, craft interview guides, and analyze data. Prior to the

main study, the researcher conducted a pilot interview to practice the proper technique of performing an in-depth, individual interview, and to ensure that the interview guide elicited narrative responses related to the phenomena of interest within the context of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter provides an outlet for which the voices of the participants of this study can be heard. The stories, recollections, and thoughts of the participants are in response to the first two research questions posed by this study:

RQ1: How do Season Passholders of Dollywood interpret their experiences of the theme park?

RQ2: For Season Passholders, in what way does nostalgia play a role in the interpretation of the experience of visiting Dollywood?

The chapter begins with exemplars, highlighted by specific quotes from the narratives of the participants, which highlight the five major thematic categories that emerged from the data. As explained previously, twenty-five themes originally emerged. Through revision and consolidation, these were further reduced to eight thematic categories, and then finally five thematic categories. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of each of the participants. Participants described their experiences related to Dollywood and the role of nostalgia as: (a) the thrill childhood revisited, (b) intergenerational and interpersonal connections, (c) appreciation of heritage and values, (d) yearning for an idealized state, and (e) connecting with the celebrity.

"Sometimes an Old Memory Gets in My Eye": Childhood Revisited

Through the various themes, attractions, and entertainment offerings, Dollywood conjures images of childhood associations and feelings for many of the participants. These images range from previous family vacations to Dollywood, to visits to other vacation

destinations, to items that were once associated with an individual's childhood, to childlike wonder when experiencing something new and previously undiscovered. Some of these feelings are related to past consumable products, but not all are directly tied to products.

Childhood wonder and innocence, and the ability to relive those feelings through escapism, were apparent within the narratives of the participants. Larry and Rhonda both saw their summer vacations taken to the South as a way to experience a different – and almost exotic – way of life, which they both appreciated, as it was very different from their daily routines. Both were raised in an urban environment in New Jersey in the 1950s and 1960s, but both had numerous relatives living in the South. Many of Larry's relatives lived in North Carolina and South Carolina, while many of Rhonda's relatives resided in Virginia. Larry describes what it was like to visit the South:

> *My father is originally from Burnsville, North Carolina in Yancey County. Many relatives down there. We would come every summer to stay in North Carolina and we would split our time between my uncles' places down there. Also, we would come to Greenville, South Carolina because I had an uncle who had a farm here. So every summer, my summer vacation for two weeks was somewhere in the Carolinas, besides doing anything in New Jersey. So all of those things of going into the barn, out to the farm, seeing all of the dogs, the cows, just the different type of food. So totally different than growing up in the city, eating pizza, Italian food, Polish food. It was a totally different way of life. One of the first times I had to use an outhouse. My one uncle did not have running water in the house. I remember as a little kid that you had to go outside and there was the pump and the water came out and you had to bring the water into the house. But coming down South, visiting all of the farms, going into the Great Smoky*

> *Mountains as a child, doing picnics, going and putting your feet into the water at Chimney Rock, drinking the water out of it and saying it was just as healthy, those were the types of things where you might say it's not an amusement park, but it was sort of amusement for me because it was adventure.*

For Larry, seeing some of those recreations in Craftsman's Valley, Rivertown Junction, Timber Canyon, and Wilderness Pass provides an ability to relive that wonder that he experienced as a child. As these areas celebrate the natural beauty of the Smoky Mountains, when he goes to Dollywood, Larry is reminded of not just those childhood trips, but other associations from his childhood that still resonate with him today:

> *[They] bring me back to the Great Smoky Mountains. And when you go through those parts, it makes me think of spending time there and Smokey the Bear. That was one that I had a plush of as a kid. As a little kid I was always interested in bears. My first stuffed animal was Nippy the Bear, which I still have somewhere. I always loved bears for some reason. And I guess that was the influence of being in the South, being in the mountains – the Great Smokies – and seeing bears there. That was a big symbol when I was growing up – Smokey the Bear. So I guess when I get over to that part, it strikes me as the "Smokey the Bear Area" – lumberjacks and the Great Smoky Mountains. It makes you feel good.*

With this theming permeating through so many parts of Dollywood, like the White Water Nature Shop, specializing in bear and other nature-themed items, it's clear to see the theming evokes nostalgic memories in Larry. For him, it's more personal than just the movies and cartoons that he watched as a child and sees when he visits the Disney theme parks. As he states:

> *So that's what Dollywood brings back and a reason I like going there. It brings me back to childhood. It's one thing of experiencing cartoons or movies and that part of childhood. Dollywood brings me back to what I actually experienced and was part of in my childhood. Which is a little different than just seeing the shows and movies I liked coming to life. One isn't necessarily better than the other; they're just different experiences that are both fulfilling in their own ways.*

Larry sees Dollywood as a place to relive a period of his life that was directly experiential and not just singularly dimensional, such as recreating environments experienced only through media. However, there are elements of popular culture from Larry's childhood that are exemplified at Dollywood that resonate strongly with him. Referring to one of his favorite shows at Dollywood:

> *The one that brings me back to my childhood, that I could go and watch over and over again, is Dreamland Drive-In. That brings me to childhood to growing up in the '50s. I had two older brothers, so when my interest in music started, it wasn't in the 1960s, but 1950s music. I learned a lot about that music from them.*

Watching that show reminds Larry of his past, listening and learning about the music of the 1950s, and socializing at a local food establishment, just like the characters in the show. When he watches that show, he sees a past vision of himself within some of those characters.

Rhonda echoes similar sentiments, seeing visions of her past trips to the South present in Dollywood:

> *It was just that downhome, country experience for two weeks in the summer. We stayed with different relatives and it was just fun. It was just so different to experience the farm life. I got to milk the cows, feed the chickens, gathered the eggs, and went to slop the*

> *pigs. I got to ride the horses and we always had a hay wagon ride. We went from relative to relative. They were just so thrilled when we came. They had outhouses. My one great-uncle, when he left farming, opened up a general store. It was really nice to be with the animals. Also the good, home cooking. It was so different. We didn't have biscuits like that up in New Jersey. It was a big deal. We would go play putt-putt, which was connected to an old-fashioned carhop.*

The park provides an instance where these memories come rushing back to Rhonda and a pleasant atmosphere in which to be reminded of these trips taken as a child. Finally, Molly provides a different, but related perspective. Although she did not grow up in the South, she experienced amusement parks at a young age in her hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania:

> *So when we were really little my dad's work would have its company picnic at Idlewild [amusement park based on Mr. Rogers Neighborhood] every summer. So we always went when we were little. And we always went to Kennywood every year. I still went like a year or two ago when I was home. It's a bigger park with lots of coasters. So that was definitely part of my upbringing. We would go there once or twice every summer. So being able to go to Dollywood reminds me a lot of those fun times.*

Gerald, originally from Ohio, is also reminded of his previous amusement park excursions, citing Dollywood as one of the parks that allows him to relive some of those past days:

> *Where we lived in Ohio, we were close to a place called Cedar Point. Actually, we were directly in between Cedar Point and Kings Island. So that was just part of my growing up. My family would make little weekend trips, so we would go to Cedar Point or Kings Island. Then I moved south, before it was Dollywood it was Silver Dollar City, and I remember going there. There were a few places over in North Carolina: Maggie Valley,*

Santa's Land. So I've grown up going to theme parks. So of course any current trip to Dollywood makes me think back to those trips.

Some of the participants revealed how the opportunity to experience something educational that they may not have been exposed to before, or had maybe forgotten, was an appealing part of the experience at Dollywood. It allowed them to experience the sophomoric wonder that might not exist in their daily routines. For example, Rebecca enjoys reading the engineering details that are posted outside of Thunderhead. For her, it reminds her of her previous career goal of wanting to be an engineer:

I love reading all of the facts in line, that it has twenty-three turns and it's one of the fastest wooden rollercoasters. So I'm all into that. For the longest time I wanted to be an engineer and build rollercoasters, so that really interests me in learning all of those inside facts. That's a nice reminder of those times.

She is not upset that she is in another career, but instead, when she is reminded of this interest through those facts, it spurs memories of how her childhood interests evolved and shaped her current identity. Gloria also related to this sentiment:

When I go on vacation, it's usually not a sit-on-the-beach-type of vacation. It's usually a pre-planned, activity-based thing. It's much more thought out, planned, even if it's not an exact schedule, we at least know what we want to do or we have a top-5 set of attractions we want to see. Nothing wrong with sitting on a beach or lying around somewhere: there's nothing wrong with that, but I'm usually at a zoo or a theme park or walking around somewhere. I like that there are certain things I can learn about at Dollywood like the eagles, the crafts, and her [Dolly's] story. I don't feel I really get to

> *do that with the hustle and bustle in my life. It brings me back to a simpler time to just enjoy it and take it all in.*

As Gloria sees it, going to Dollywood allows one to escape the daily routine through education, which is influenced by a feeling that is associated with youth.

Larry, by mentioning his Nippy bear plush, illustrates the way in which the experience of Dollywood conjures memories of items from the past. Catherine provided an example of this as well:

> *I do love Festival of Nations. It was always really fun growing up. I remember a couple years in a row I would always get a doll from the China booth. Whenever I'm there for Festival of Nations, I can't help but think about that tradition and those happy memories of them. That was probably one of the reasons why Festival of Nations is probably my favorite festival there.*

For Catherine, her memories of these dolls provide a lasting connection to this particular festival at Dollywood. Through this process, she created a tradition that became repeated with each passing year that Festival of Nations was held. Carter also maintains certain traditions realized at Dollywood, especially during Dollywood's Smoky Mountain Christmas presented by Humana:

> *I always like to get kettle corn at Christmas. They have it along the Market Square area. Going back to the Christmas decorations, that was one of my first memories at Dollywood, was their huge Christmas celebration. They used to have this drink called wassail, and it's this German hot apple cider drink, and it just tastes like liquid Christmas to me. It makes me think of this one time we were down at the Country Fair area and it started flurrying and we were on the rides drinking wassail and hearing the music. So for me that's what I so associate with Christmas in my mind. So whenever I'm*

back at Dollywood around that time, I like to recreate that memory. It means a lot to how I celebrate Christmas.

Appeals to the senses served to provoke nostalgic recollection in many of the participants. As Lesley noted:

It's something when you haven't been there in a while and you're like, 'oh yeah, I remember that.' Or you smell funnel cakes and you're like, 'I remember that from when I went to the fair as a child.' So it brings back all of that. That's what Dollywood is geared toward. Bringing that aspect back. Say you came here when you were 10 years old and you come back when you're 30. There'll still be one thing that you walk and see and BAM you're back to 10 years old.

As Lesley mentions, certain appeals to the senses cause those remembrances. Certain foods served at Dollywood evoked memories of previous visits and nostalgic evocations of the past. Some of Rebecca's favorites include:

We'd always go to the corndog stand or meet at Market Square and get a Polish sausage. We'd grab something at one of those and then go grab a seat at the Back Porch Theater and watch a show. Even now, whenever I smell a corndog, I think of Dollywood and being there.

Gerald also echoes how the senses provide a pathway to nostalgic remembrances:

I guess just the sites and the smells and the food and the thrill of...I remember the first time I was tall enough to ride one of the big-people rides, it was a real right of passage. Actually, when you got sick, it was even better. Whenever I hear or feel or taste any of those things again, it brings me right back.

Gerald touched upon the thrill of being on certain attractions causing nostalgic flashbacks to one's own past experiences. By immersing oneself in these thrilling experiences, the individual is able to escape to a time of perceived less worry, such as childhood, where thrills were first being experienced. Bradley delves a little deeper into how it causes him to be nostalgic:

> *I think part of it is the thrill of the rollercoasters. You know how people say they get a high from doing that? It's just great, exciting fun. It's something that even if you never experienced as a kid, you feel like a kid. You being able to remember certain memories that might parallel that and you're super wondrous. All your cares are gone and you're just flying, especially on Wild Eagle.*

Jacob echoes the same sentimentality:

> *It reminds me of my parents taking me to Opryland and just being a kid. Even though Opryland isn't around anymore, I still get the same feelings when I go to Dollywood with my friends. It brings about those nostalgic types of feelings. It's just such an escape. I'm not thinking about my bills or my work stuff. It's just happy. It's like a little universe all it's own: walk through the door, reality doesn't exist anymore, and it's time for silly hats, rides, and airtime. It's being a kid again and experiencing that all through a child's eyes.*

Keeping with the idea of wonder, just the ability to revisit some of the aesthetics of the park that have remained constants throughout its existence provides a chance to reflect back on one's first impressions of the park. For Rebecca:

> *As a kid, I would say...just everything looked so much bigger when I was little. So when I see some of those rides like Thunderhead and Wild Eagle and Tennessee Tornado, I'm*

> *taken back to those old visions of looking up at them in amazement and being scared. But it's a great feeling to just look at them in awe. I guess it kind of enhances the whole experience of the ride – to carry those memories of riding it in the past and reliving those thrills.*

Dollywood provides a means for individuals to recreate past memories, to experience thrills and enjoyment that aren't apparent in their daily lives, and to uphold traditions in which to reinforce certain cultural practices and individual identity.

"Daddy Was an Old Time Preacher Man":
Interpersonal and Intergenerational Connections

An apparent theme of the lived experience of visiting Dollywood was the connections that the participants were able to forge with others. Some of these were through direct experience, such as visiting the park with loved ones and friends, but also mentioned was the ability to connect with those who have passed on, whether through the cultural artifacts found at the park or through stories that had been passed down and were recreated in some fashion at Dollywood.

Many participants cite how Dollywood acts as a means in which to bring people together, especially family and friends. As Teresa states:

> *We noticed that in any given area it always seems like it was easy for everyone in the party to find something to do. If you're there with a big family, if you have grandparents, parents, and children of various ages, you really don't have to split up and say "We'll see you in two hours." You can actually all find things to do. I talked to Dollywood, and that actually is by design. They don't want families to have to split up and not spend the*

> *day with each other, even if they have different things that they're interested in or have different things they want to do.*

The participants note how trips to Dollywood are reminiscent of previous excursions together and how experiencing Dollywood can rekindle memories of past times. As situations evolve and individuals go on their separate paths in life, a trip to Dollywood allows them to reunite and reconstruct the pleasant feelings that once existed. As Catherine notes:

> *I remember going on the bumper cars [Demolition Derby] with my sister and the swings [The Waltzing Swinger]. We always did those and The Scrambler. She was my riding buddy for the longest time. I definitely had a bunch of great experiences at Miss Lillian's growing up. My sister and I would go up and do the chicken dance every time we came. My sister and I aren't all that close anymore. But when we go to Dollywood, it sort of brings us a little bit closer, like we used to be. That's one of the things I cherish most about going there with her.*

For Catherine, the experience of Dollywood allows her to rekindle a relationship that she once had with her sister, and to remember the pleasant experiences that they once shared, even if their present-day relationship is not the warmest. When Jacob visits Dollywood, he remembers a previous roommate who he had moved to Knoxville with from Nashville:

> *My old roommate who I moved up here from Nashville with, we would go. Those were the most fun times I remember having, going with him in the early '90s. Just being with him and our friends and having a good time.*

The joy of sharing one's passion for Dollywood was also present in some of the participants' narratives. Sean, who has a strong passion for Dollywood, enjoys experiencing the park with friends of his, especially those who are first-time visitors or who have families:

One of my favorite shows at Christmas is 'Twas the Night Before Christmas. That one is really cute. A friend and I were there and she brought her daughter down. She's one of the group members who comes in a lot, but she'd never seen that. She's never been to it, so I suggested we go see it, since her daughter was in the first or second grade. They just fell in love with the show. Of all the shows, it's geared more toward kids anyway. It felt really good to introduce them to something that I enjoy, but I thought they would enjoy too. And now every year when we go back and see it, I can't help but feel good thinking about that first experience with them. They really made it even greater for me.

Dwight also echoes this sentiment:

When I go with my niece, she rides the Tennessee Tornado at least five times, wants to ride all of the rides, and so we meet up there and do it all day long. We synchronize to see it all and we do it in one day. When I go with my mom, she's part of the southern gospel thing...she lives and breathes that. She's like a Dead Head, but for gospel music. She's at every southern gospel anything. We've been going there for the last ten or eleven years because of that festival. And I think about that and being with my niece and my mom. It's all good feelings and good memories of being with them.

Finally, Rebecca sees this as an opportunity in which to spend quality time with her grandfather, showing how individuals from younger generations look for connections with members of older generations:

My grandfather is a big bird enthusiast, so we would always go see the eagles and listen to the show about the birds of America. It was great because he is so into birds. He's a bird watcher and so any time they had a bird out, he could pinpoint its name and some facts about it immediately, before they would say it. I thought that was funny. And then

we always loved going into the shop where they have all of the animal stuff, trying to find him gifts. It was really a great way for us to spend time together. Whenever I see those birds, I can't help but think of those times with him. It's become a tradition of ours to always go see them. Yeah, I'd say that's definitely a nostalgic thing for me there.

For Gloria, she appreciates how Dollywood not only reminds her of various pleasant past experiences with friends and family, but how a new visit creates fresh memories for which to reflect upon:

I think the thing that stands out the most is who you are with, and getting to experience different things with different people – family members, friends – that's what makes it memorable to me. I think it's about the time spent together and the memories you are creating; creating new memories, but also reminiscing on past memories as well. It makes me think back to prior Christmases or prior experiences in theme parks or time spent together on attractions or seeing a show or just being together, whether over a meal or walking around or whatever it may be. It's something memorable, just spending time together.

Catherine also sees Dollywood as akin to looking at a family photo album:

It's almost like a memory of the past, but you know every time you go that you're going to make new memories. It's like walking into a family photo album; like you're walking back towards everything. It's just something that feels like home – it's a home away from home.

A major sentiment emerged that the experience of Dollywood allows the individual to rekindle memories of those who have passed, or even those people that the individual never met in person. Bradley spoke lovingly of his grandparents and the opportunities that they presented

for him. They would take him to a variety of places, Dollywood being one of them. When he rides the Smoky Mountain River Rampage, memories of them are immediately sparked:

> *I just remember my uncle getting so wet and started cursing because he had to walk around in wet shoes all day. But it reminds me of my grandparents, who I have a very, very special place in my heart because they lived right across the street from me until I was about 19 or 20, and then they moved. Not really far away, just a few towns over, about 40 minutes away to be closer to my aunt. My grandparents went on trips every year and they took a grandchild with them every time. They took me to Colorado, where I got to go up to Pike's Peak. They took me to St. Louis and we did the Arch. They took me to Springfield, IL and got to see Abraham Lincoln's house. They brought me here [Dollywood] and they brought me to the ocean for the first time. Just tons of opportunities that I wouldn't have been afforded without them. But in general, I was just over their house all of the time. They were like second parents really. So doing this and it does bring memories back to my grandparents, because they influenced me having a love for travel, period. It brings back those good memories of them. They both passed away. I had my grandfather all the way up until six years ago. It's pretty special.*

Lesley has similar memories when she goes to Aunt Granny's Restaurant since it was where her grandmother used to work:

> *You don't go without going to Aunt Granny's. That goes back to my grandmother's history that she was the first lead they had at Aunt Granny's. It's been kind of a family tradition. My grandmother worked there for over 30 years. So going there is like having lunch or dinner with her again. It's extremely spiritual for me – like we're all with her again.*

Larry sees so much of his own father in the different artifacts at Dollywood. Speaking about Red's Drive-In and the Rockin' Roadway, both located in Jukebox Junction:

> *If I go to Red's and I see the old cars, it's like seeing my father's cars. I can say, "Wow my father had this car." This is the Lil' Smoky's that we would go to on our trips down South. There is the jukebox playing. You see the old black-and-white police cars and the old-time cars. So it definitely brings back memories, and even the ride...the small car ride...it has the 1956 Thunderbirds. Every time I see those I think back to when my father wrote a note out and signed it that when I grew up he would buy me a '56 or a '55 Thunderbird. Never got that, but he did buy me a car, which I did appreciate. It was a '64 Buick, which was fine. So when I see that '55 or '56 Ford Thunderbird, boy I remember him so much. And that's probably the reason why I stayed with Ford pretty much my whole life.*

Larry is able to vicariously share a moment with his father once again through these common ephemeral artifacts, and it is a very powerful experience for him. Going beyond just remembrance, Larry notes the importance of providing to his child the experiences that he felt lucky enough to have with his own parents, especially since those individuals are no longer living, almost as if connecting the generations together. In Larry's words:

> *Some of it too is that I feel pretty good that I can extend my childhood and have my son experience some of the things that I did. Which is something that, to an extent, I was able to experience from my father. Not only do you rekindle your childhood memories, it's nice to say that I'm going to pass my childhood memories on to my son, but then my son is going to have these memories also that will be nostalgic for him that he can pass on to his children. He is pretty appreciative of that and understands kind of what it all means.*

> *He's always had an appreciation for history. And I will admit, there are many good shows that I see there at Dollywood that I tear up at because it just make you think of childhood – Dreamland Drive-In, My People, It's a Wonderful Life – just to name a few off the top of my head. It makes you think of people who are not here anymore. It really makes you think of how long you're going to be here.*

Rhonda also connects, in a similar manner, to her relatives who have passed on:

> *I never got to meet my great-grandfather since he died before I was born, but I got to meet my great-grandmother and hear some of her stories of growing up in Virginia and what life was like back then. I go into some of the stores at Dollywood or some of the restaurants and I see some of the jars and pictures and quilts that are up and they remind me of her and her stories. It's someone I can never speak to again, but I feel that seeing that helps those memories stay with me.*

Finally, Catherine feels a special connection to her grandparents, who are still living, but being able to see what they saw in their youth:

> *I know in the restaurant, Red's Diner, they have pictures of Dolly's Sevierville yearbook and pictures of her when she went there, so it reminds me of my grandparents and how they were once young. I guess it's echoes of the past, but they're vibrant right there. They're still around. It's interesting to think about them as young people, because I guess they were young at the same time Dolly was young, or even before that. It creates a special connection with them, like...we experience the same thing, but in different universes, if that makes sense.*

Also apparent was how some of the entertainers at Dollywood caused a few of the participants to reminisce about relatives they had whose personality aligned with the

entertainers', or who reminded them of certain television and cinema personalities from days of the past. The one entertainer who evoked much of these feelings was Connie Prince, who plays Miss Lillian at Miss Lillian's Smokehouse. Larry discusses his impressions of Miss Lillian and the similarities he sees in her and his own relatives:

> *Yes, my Aunt Myrtle and my Uncle Bird, those were the ones who lived right across from the Lil' Smoky's. We would always have fried chicken at their house. And Aunt Myrtle even looked like her a little bit. The glasses and her size – that was my Aunt Myrtle. And I can see her, not that she would run around as the "Chicken Lady," but there was a resemblance in terms of looks and personality. So when I go there I can say to myself, "Ok, I'm sitting in my aunt's house, we're having our meal." When you put the food together with it, it is definitely nostalgic for me. There's definitely some nostalgia there at that restaurant for me. The interior as well with that whole farm-look, too. When I think about it, she's reminds me a lot of Minnie Pearl. Yeah, that's exactly who she reminds me of! I remember watching that show [Hee Haw] in college or when I came and my father and I would watch it together.*

Sean reiterates this as well:

> *Miss Lillian and the chicken house, somehow that always got to me. I've gone from "who is that crazy woman" to befriending her. Some of my friends and I have really gotten to know her and have a personal connection with her, and she'll recognize us. There's this family vibe, if you go often enough, that she creates that really makes you feel like you're back home, reminding me of some of my aunts and cousins and all them. Also, her mother was Cousin Tuny in Jackson, who I remember watching on television and hearing on the radio as a kid. She was sort of the Minnie Pearl of Jackson. I didn't*

> *know that until a few years ago. I think that's where the entertainment bug got her, where she learned it from you could say. So just being around her is like being back in my kitchen again as child.*

Dollywood is seen as a place where guests can connect to others, whether those individuals are in the present or left to the past. Experiencing the park directly with living individuals, or indirectly through memories or artifacts representative of past figures, is part of the appeal of visiting Dollywood for these participants.

"Appalachian Memories": Appreciation for Heritage and Values

Participants, especially those with historical roots based in East Tennessee and greater Appalachia, cited an appreciation for the celebration of the culture of the area. Much of this is illustrated in experiencing Craftsman's Valley. Carter, a lifelong Knoxville resident, states that:

> *I think that it does feel very traditional, nostalgic, with the cast iron workers and glassblowers. It's just stuff that you don't find anywhere anymore and I like that they try to preserve these old ways of living. It feels like it's almost a museum. Not a museum, but they're trying to keep an old way of life alive in an interesting way. It definitely feels like you're in Appalachia from fifty to one hundred years ago. Dolly stayed true to her roots to keep this here and she employed so many local people and craftsman to make a living. I think there is a level of authenticity that doesn't exist at other parks, if they tried to replicate it.*

Rebecca, also a lifelong Knoxville resident, sees how the park connects to her own Appalachian heritage, something that she is proud of:

> *It's representative of having East Tennessee roots: we're kind of laid back, everything looks nice, everything goes together, and I like that they have Owens Farm because we*

also do this. It's kind of something that we all did at one point; like there are farms here. My grandfathers were craftsmen. It takes them back, it takes the family back, and it takes me back even though I never really saw that stuff personally. I think today people don't get that experience. I feel like it is nostalgic, which is kind of a little sad because it means it doesn't really exist anymore. Just the sites and smells: all of it. It immerses you in a different place, but a familiar place. This area gets a bad wrap, but I'm damn proud of it. If you don't like it, there are other places to go.

Catherine, who is also a lifelong Knoxville resident and is prideful of her Appalachian heritage, discusses the impact of seeing historical industries represented at Dollywood, ones that her relatives were part of:

I really like when you go on Mystery Mine and Daredevil Falls and see the whole coal mining and timber themes. Those are jobs that people in this area had for a while. My relatives were in those types of jobs. So it's like they're being true to the history of the area. That's nice. Just the little backwoods feel to it. My great-grandma grew up in Cades Cove before they had to move out. So it's kind of nice...it's almost like a roots-type deal, which gets me nostalgic. All these types of jobs are really looked down upon today, which is sad. But it's the reason we can have what we have today.

Important is not only celebrating and being prideful of one's own heritage, but also the opportunity to pass that on down to others who never had the opportunity to directly experience the way of life represented at Dollywood. Dwight is proud to be able to celebrate the heritage of his family with his descendants, especially with his niece:

Both my mom and dad's family grew up just like her [Dolly Parton]. My dad lived in a little house with no insulation. There were times when it snowed that the snow would

come inside the house because there were cracks between the wood panels. So my dad and Dolly grew up exactly the same, with lots of kids in the house. My grandmother grew up the same way. My mom, they had made some money by the time she was born, so she lived in a brick house. My whole family grew up like that. My grandparents and my uncle had a general store like in that movie where she went to the general store. So it's nice that I can pass this along. My niece, who lives in Charlotte, doesn't understand any of that. So it's nice for her to see where she came from. She's not seeing any of that because we all live in a very technological world that is very different from that. It's hard for the younger ones to understand that's how most of our ancestors lived, where they didn't have running water or electricity. So it's just nice that there are very few places that you can go around here in which the heritage is still there. And it's also nice that it's not being demonized the way so much of Southern heritage is these days.

Those who did not grow up in the South, but were exposed to it through their own Appalachian heritage, like Larry and Rhonda, also have an appreciation for the culture represented at Dollywood. Speaking about *My People*, the show that features members of Dolly Parton's actual family celebrating their story, Larry says:

What it does strike in my mind is Southern heritage and especially the will of mountain people, like my father and his relatives in North Carolina. It is that type of family unity and how they stay together. And no matter how bad things get, we're going to make it through this. So that's one show that definitely stands out to me.

He continues about the representation of heritage at Dollywood:

When I would visit North Carolina, it was nice to see a totally different part of the family life and having my father recall a lot of his childhood growing up. I enjoyed learning

about our heritage growing up here, such as seeing that there were roads named after the family, seeing the family's cemetery, which all still exist today. Learning about our heritage and seeing how far it went back. It all feels like it comes alive here at Dollywood. All those old stories, it's almost like they're here again.

Rhonda also finds appeal in the heritage represented at the park, as it represents that of her family as well. She finds great joy in visiting the recreation of the Parton family cabin that is located in Dollywood:

I love her [Dolly Parton's] little house. It reminds me...it was a little bit bigger than hers, but it reminds me of my great-grandmother's house. It was a log cabin. It was the old homestead on her farm. We were there and the family was getting ready to sell off the property. Nobody had lived there for years. That's part of it too. It's a heritage that people are proud of and shouldn't let go.

Some of the participants not from Appalachia, but whose historical background could be considered working class, found appreciation in the heritage represented at Dollywood. Much of these sentiments are surrounded around certain values that were embedded in the spirit that is represented at the park. Molly provides insight into why the Dollywood Express, the train ride at Dollywood, is appealing to her and what it says about her identity:

We always go on the train because I love the train. That is a must-do. It's just an old-fashioned train that you don't really see a lot of. In Pittsburgh where I grew up, they have a train, but it's not as fancy as the one here. This one really seems old-fashioned and kind of cool. And getting to see the Smoky Mountains, which I think is always pretty. My grandfather was a coal miner, so that's a big reason I like it too. It just sort of has that rugged, Appalachian feel to it, which I feel I can relate to as a coal miner's

> *granddaughter. Like my Loretta Lynn pun? It runs on real coal, and I just think it's cool and kind of relaxing.*

Bradley finds joy in 'people-watching' at Dollywood, being reminded of those that he grew up with in Mississippi:

> *I think for Dollywood, I also go for people watching. It's very interesting people, well some of them, if you get my drift. It's usually a lot of country people...NASCAR t-shirts, overalls, etc. So it does remind me of my childhood because I grew up in Mississippi, where it's very Southern and very country. It's nice to be among them again. So it is nostalgic and plays back to childhood and my heritage. Yeah maybe it's a bit judgmental, but it's a fondness more than anything.*

Gloria was raised in South Florida and her mother is originally from Queens, New York, while her father is originally from Naples, Italy. She had not been to East Tennessee, or any part of Appalachia, prior to 2016, but she identified strongly with the heritage presented at Dollywood. This was because of the values personified through the messaging communicated through the attractions and theming at Dollywood. As she states:

> *I can see the same ideals and the same values that are instilled in Dollywood. Those same values of staying humble and always remembering your roots – I see a lot of those values in my own parents and their upbringing. Having nothing and working hard and making a name for themselves. I can see, even though it wasn't me personally, I still feel like I've been a witness to it in a sense. Keeping those blue-collar values, even though you didn't personally live through it, you still have those same ideals. They have been instilled in you, and you begin to think that way, even though it's not your current circumstance. An overarching thing about Dolly is that she's relatable. So that no*

matter what walk of life you come from, she's relatable. Even though I didn't personally experience her story, I still feel that I've been instilled with those ideals. And she has such a good relationship and following of both evangelical Christians and the gay community. So I feel she is extremely relatable, and that makes you empathize and makes it that much more enjoyable. The use of butterflies in the park is very inspiring, not just to someone who appreciates butterflies. The quotes and the meaning behind them are great. Just about dreaming and believing in yourself – it's just something that I've believed in and taken to heart for most of my life. I've appreciated it and felt motivated by it. Seeing it somewhere so prevalent is inspiring.

She continues discussing what it means to have that represented in such a successful manner and being part of that heritage:

The popularity of Dollywood, I don't think Disney or Six Flags can say the same thing about what it means culturally to their historical community. The locals are who frequent the park, that's literally their culture and background and upbringing, so to have a park built on those values and ideals and to be surrounded by it – that has to be something special. To see one of their own make it must make them proud. So that's really unique and interesting and appealing.

Finally, she states how in that connecting with the heritage in terms of values, she wants to be one to help celebrate it:

I find myself drawn to those historical areas. I especially enjoyed Craftsman's Valley with all of the artisans and all of the shops. I feel that I'm drawn to that although I didn't grow up like that and it's not anything I experienced, I'm drawn to it. It's something that's appealing to me. I guess it's the same draw that I have to the park. They're

> *artisans and this is their craft. The glassblowing, the blacksmith and ironworks, the jarred jam and jelly store, the little honeybee farm, and the goat's milk soap stand. That's their craft and they're coming to Dollywood. That's their livelihood and their lifestyle, and for them to come to Dollywood and put that on display and have that opportunity is great. What they're sharing with all the visitors, I'm drawn to that in a sense. I have an appreciation for it, even though it's not my background. It's relatable in a sense. They're hardworking, kind, and gentle people. It's a very humble outpouring and it makes you want to support them. When the time comes that I'm not in the area anymore, I want to go there and stock up on their crafts. Like the bar soap, I want to get it there. You want to go out of your way to help people who make it their livelihood to help other people and give back.*

Teresa, who grew up in Alabama near the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, also echoes this sentiment:

> *When they have the artisans there, that's really interesting. I just find that super neat to see people literally carving a chair. I think that's super cool and worthwhile and a more accurate celebration of the roots and history of the culture and the works that have come from it, rather than Li'l Abner hillbilly stuff you see in the rest of Pigeon Forge and the area.*

Hand-in-hand with an appreciation of Appalachian culture was the recognition and appreciation for Christianity that appears at the park. An interesting aspect was not that Christianity should serve as the guiding philosophy for which to act, but as a reminder of one's heritage, upbringing, and link to the past. Rebecca is especially fond of the Robert F. Thomas

Chapel in the park. Remembering her summer job there during her early college years she states:

> *One thing I really liked when I was working there was that if you were scheduled on Sunday, you could actually go to church. And that's the Herschend family in general. I remember at my orientation, God, Christ, and Christian were mentioned on the hour every hour, which to me is fine, because I'm a Christian, which sometimes I can feel like that's a little bit exclusive, but at the same time you are in East Tennessee and it goes along with the heritage of the place. It's a gorgeous building with a gorgeous piano. I love going in there. The pews are still nicely preserved. It's nice that they recognize those things still.*

Gerald appreciated the celebration of gospel music at the park. It reminded him not just of family and heritage, but also activities that he took part in in the past. He was jubilant to know that that type of music still has an audience. As he states:

> *I love the Southern Gospel Jubilee and the harvest festival because that's kind of my background too. I used to sing in a southern gospel group, and now I'm in a gay men's chorus in town. I like the Kingdom Heirs. They put on a great show and the music is wonderful. It's very nostalgic for me. It takes me back to my church days.*

Larry claims to not be a very religious person. Although he was baptized Catholic and attended Catholic schools for his entire childhood, he is not a regular church visitor, but finds an appreciation in the religious offerings at Dollywood, whether through the southern gospel shows or the shows that focus on the religious aspects of Christmas. As he states:

> *Christmas there is just wow. It's just spectacular there. And again, there was one thing when you went to Disney, you enjoyed the light shows of Disney, but I will say this, when*

we went, it was more of New York City streets and I was not a big person of going to New York City during Christmas. So it really didn't spark anything from childhood or my teenage years because I never went then. But it was great watching the Osborne Dancing Lights at Disney and it gave you that Christmas spirit. It was the Christmas of the present, I would say. I won't say Christmas future, but Christmas present. When you go to Dollywood, it makes you think of Christmas past and brings back your childhood, in a sense of this is the way I remember my childhood. I remember these lights, and I remember the old plastic light up figures. It wasn't that there was a light show, just that there were a lot of lights. And people actually saying "Merry Christmas" and the shows. They will switch to religious shows and have a Christmas theme and people aren't afraid to say "Merry Christmas" to you. They're not afraid of being what may be considered "politically incorrect" today. Not that I'm a very outwardly religious person where I go to church all the time, but there is a church in the park. They do have services. And I think that is part of it. They are not afraid to speak their mind and say what they believe in. When you think about it, this is what I grew up with. I've also found myself going to religious shows, which again, I don't know if I would have done. But it brings up... growing up Catholic, I was used to the big church and all of the Catholic imagery, but I don't have a problem going to more of the Protestant-focused things like the gospel shows and listening to them. What do I hear? My father wasn't Catholic, so I listen to some of this music and now I know why my father would say that he liked certain songs that weren't of the norm for the area or time period. I didn't realize that some of these were religious-based or had religious roots to them. Now I do and I have an appreciation for it because of how it influenced my childhood and heritage.

The religiousness that is pervasive at Dollywood seems to be appreciated, not because of dogmatic doctrine, but because of its nostalgic qualities to the past, whether to personal childhood or to heritage. It is recognized as a quality of the heritage of the area and enjoyed in order to celebrate that heritage. This provides segue into the next theme of those yearning for a more idealized state in which to live.

"Those Were the Days": Yearning for an Idealized State

Theme parks recreate an idealized, sanitized version of history. Clean environments, safe streets, and friendly people foster this notion of the existence of a past that more reflected stronger values than what is believed to be present in today's age. Larry appreciates how Dollywood does not try to evoke visions of the future or modernity in its theming, which would probably drive him away from visiting the park. The vision that they have fits what he looks for in an experience:

> *Some of these old things that we grew up with died out and people decided that it was time to go modern, but then in the end, you see where it is brought back. You see that happening an awful lot, where shows or products or packaging from the past comes back. People look back and want to go retro. So many of my friends, whether on Facebook or face-to-face, we are always nostalgically reminiscing. Or you go through a nostalgically themed place and are in awe of it. Sometimes change for the sake of change is just not good and what made something good is no longer special. Disney, especially at [Disney's] Hollywood Studios, is starting to remove a lot of those nostalgic elements that attracted me to it. The one part that I hope they're not getting rid of, the places like [50's] Prime Time [Café] and Sci-Fi [Dine-In Theater Restaurant], which provide that experience. I'm hoping that Disney does not move away some of these nostalgic things*

and I know it's a business and you have to market to them too. So think about this now: is Disney having an effect on me, because of all of the major changes going on recently, am I not looking for nostalgia anymore from them? Which is a shame to me. They're taking away these things, which might make me apathetic to going there. But Dollywood should be happy about that since I'm going there more now.

Many of the participants felt that the ideals and practices that were portrayed at Dollywood encountered in the theming, attractions, and interactions with others, personified a time more desirable. As Gloria states:

I think what makes it an attractive place to visit is because of the emotions that I feel, because it is such a down-to-earth place. You feel welcome when you walk in. It's just quintessentially Southern. You can feel, even though it's not tangible, you can feel the hard work that went into everything and the people that work there. Kind of everything that comes to your mind when you think of traditional, Southern hospitality. Warm, in a sense; being appreciative and grateful, saying "thank you," and manners. You don't find a lot of that in South Florida. I'd say it's even different from Disney. The people who work there are generally extremely friendly and very helpful. But the other guests, not so much. It's not like an overcrowded park like Disney, with people pushing and shoving and being rude. It's simple and calm. It's relaxing and enjoyable. How it all should be.

Sean has a great affinity for the individuals who work at Dollywood, especially Miss Lillian. He wishes there was more understanding and decency in the way people treat each other, like Miss Lillian treats her guests:

She reads people well, and she handles situations. There was one episode...a friend and I just go in and watch, there was one time where she was interacting with a girl with Down

syndrome, probably about 15 or 16 years old and about Miss Lillian's size. The girl reached for her banjo and I'm thinking, "Uh oh." I'm not good with kids so I would probably be like, "NO! Get away from me!" But she had such a calm, sensitive way about her. She knew how to handle that from experience and just from love and care. So she just directed the kid to not even wanting the banjo anymore. She pulled out the chicken and started to distract the child, and there was no confrontation. She just knows how to handle situations. I love her for that. She's just underappreciated for what she does. She inspires me and I think we all need a little bit of that today.

Dwight echoes these sentiments as well:

Miss Lillian's just one of those spirits that's always pleasant. I wish we were all a little bit more like her. That's nice to go somewhere and people are pleasant. It's a place where you're not rushed and no one has a comprehension of, or...there's no judgment there. I can be who I am and no one will judge. Which people would probably not really think when you mention Dollywood and East Tennessee.

Maggie, talking about her son and his associates, feels that the current generation has lost a critical form of communication and believes it will cause a shift in how his generation is communicated to by marketers. She is a little remorseful of it and believes that something special will be lost:

Watching my son grow up in this age of social media and the constant connection to each other, to people of their own age groups, I think has created a really big challenge in connecting with older generations. A good part of your own story comes from your relationships with older generations. And I don't think that the younger generation has much of that unless you really just force it, unless you take away their phone and make

them have dinner with their grandparents and actually talk to them. But I feel it happens a lot less than it did for my generation and for older generations. I think we're going to see a huge swing in a lot of things, especially marketing, because of it. It's kind of sad.

Based on the sentiments of the participants, what is yearned for is not an exclusion of any group, like a number of scholars have claimed (Klugman, 1995; Kuenz, 1995; Waldrep, 1995), but a desire to return to a way of treating all individuals, which is felt to be missing today. Dollywood seems to be a beacon in which to remind guests of that, and perhaps, inspire them to act upon once they return home.

"Unlikely Angel": Connecting with the Celebrity

For all of the participants, Dolly Parton's presence within the park was an influence in their attendance. Many cited her philanthropic work within the community, such as her financial support for the people of Gatlinburg after a massive fire had wreaked havoc on the town in 2016, the impact of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which promotes youth literacy by providing books to children every month up until their fifth birthday, and her stance on certain social issues, such as equal rights for members of the homosexual community. However, much of her influence is also tied to the memories that the participants had of being a fan of hers. Lesley was the most outspoken fan of Dolly Parton and talked extensively about how parts of Dolly's career, represented at Dollywood, cause her to think back on certain parts of her life:

I have the biggest love for Dolly. I would always come when I knew she was going to be here in the park. And I remember that from when I was like 12. It actually probably had to be even before then too. I have a Dolly wall where I keep all of my memorabilia that I've had for so many years. She has done so much for Sevier County. She's so spiritual; she's so God-focused. She gives it all back to God. You don't see that in celebrities.

> *Her music has gotten me through some jubilee, sorrow, happiness, from every emotion; you go through every emotion when it comes to her music. And I listen to her older music and I'm like it doesn't even sound like her, but it's still that message. All of her music has messages one way or another, whether you can take it and run with it with one song or take something from another song. It's just, it's hard to describe. If you're not a diehard Dolly Parton fan, you can't understand it. She has so many that love her. So when I walk around Dollywood and I hear one of her songs come on or I go see My People, I'm transported back to where I was when I first heard it. Yeah, that's probably what gets me most nostalgic here. I go to Dollywood for her. I aspire to be like her.*

Molly also associates Dolly with her past, and feels nostalgic when she is at Chasing Rainbows, Dolly's dedicated museum at the park:

> *I thought that [Chasing Rainbows] was so cool! I think it's some of those things that made me say, "Oh yeah I saw that movie! Oh I forgot she was in that!" I think growing up in the '90s and seeing her in those costumes definitely makes me nostalgic. It's just fun to see all of the Dolly stuff and some of the celebrity stuff and how she weaves that into the park as a whole.*

Carter, Rebecca, and Catherine were all participants in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. At Dollywood, when they see nods to some of the stories they received, it evokes nostalgic feelings for not just the stories, but for Dolly as well. As Rebecca states:

> *I'm grateful for her [Dolly]. When I see her, I'm reminded of The Little Engine That Could and the books I would get. I'm glad that going to Dollywood helps to support something like that.*

Carter's take on it:

> *She started to take on the moniker of the "Book Lady." But when I think of Dolly, yes I think of Jolene, 9 to 5, Islands in the Stream, but I think of the books that I got too. Seeing some of those at Chasing Rainbows makes me very nostalgic. There's part of my childhood right there, forever connected with Dolly.*

Finally, Catherine echoes:

> *I see a lot of Dolly in the Heartsong Theater. We would go when we were little and it talks about the Imagination Library and that's an amazing thing that she does. I was lucky to be part of it. I feel really happy when I see some of the characters in the park. Seeing her always reminds me of that.*

The participants cited *My People* as a direct connection to Dolly through her family. Seeing Dolly's past unfold through the production transposes her story onto the viewer, making it feel very familiar, almost as if you were there. As Larry mentions:

> *When we've gone to see that, seeing that her family is still there and how she has kept the connection to the area. You just never know when she is going to show up, because she pops in and out. And I'm sure that's how people felt at Disneyland when Walt was alive. So it's a little nostalgic, like watching The Wonderful World of Color episodes where Walt would be in the park. So to me, it's very personal being there, and that her family is there, makes it very personal. It's almost like, ok I can go there and I can talk to her family after the show and you feel like they can tell me about her. You feel like you almost grew up with her, like her experiences were yours too. So to me it's very, very personal.*

Gloria also felt connected to Dolly's past through *My People*:

> *Probably My People too, because it has a lot of, literally, it's her family. So it has a lot of that genuine feeling to it. It's not a big production and it's her actual family and they're singing. It has some history to it and some storytelling, which is a nice aspect. It makes me nostalgic to see how someone could rise up from nothing and make it so big. I feel like we're all her people; we were there singing along into that tin can, dreaming our own dreams.*

Sean laments that he feels that the park is becoming less-Dolly focused, which causes him to feel nostalgic for some of the park's past offerings. He feels that some of the places were Dolly was most present should be preserved:

> *Dollywood is doing some things where they're tearing down things that I miss. Applejack's is one example. It was where Dolly's little apartment was before she had the DreamMore. Now she just uses that, but when Dollywood first started, they made that little apartment for her. She would live in the upstairs section. They tore it down, but it had significance! When you talk about nostalgia, that was an old, nostalgic building that just was taken away.*

As Dolly's career has lasted for over fifty years, it's understandable to see how individuals have grown up with her in their lives, and the different ways in which they feel connected to her through the park. Nostalgia does play a role in forging those connections.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

For the participants in this study, it was clear that Dollywood is a place for them to relive moments from their childhood, bond with others, honor heritage and values, realize an idealized society, and connect with Dolly Parton. The first purpose of this discussion is to provide theoretical implications of the study through answering the remaining research question:

RQ3: How do these interpretations inform and build upon the concept of nostalgia? This is accomplished by explaining how the participants' responses currently fit into the various categories of nostalgia. A new category of nostalgia is then proposed to provide insight into where these current categories of nostalgia fall short.

The second purpose of this discussion is to provide implications for tourism operators, such as those who operate Dollywood, as to how the findings may be useful for sustaining visits to and attracting guests to the park.

Nostalgia Through the Lived Experienced of Visiting Dollywood

Much of what the participants described as part of the lived experience of visiting Dollywood fits what has been described in previous literature. Personal (or real) nostalgia was evident throughout the narratives of the participants. As Baker and Kennedy (1994) note, personal/real nostalgia is evoked when one encounters an exemplar of a time period in which they personally experienced, such as hearing "a song that was popular when an individual was in college brings back a time when s/he thought s/he could conquer the world" (p. 171). The participants' narratives provided numerous examples of this manifestation.

Whether it was through previous trips to Appalachia, the exhilaration and thrill of being on a rollercoaster for the first time, or having one's music be seen as popular again, an

appreciation for associations from the past that the individual directly experienced are reconstructed through the attractions and theming presented at Dollywood. The Southern-inspired dining options available at the park presented the opportunity for the individual to not only imagine what this type of food might have tasted like, but to relive the remembered experience of consuming the same type of food in childhood through these reconstructions. Certain practices, such as holiday celebrations, are relived, reminding those of when the area in which they originally were raised did not limit those celebrations might be the case today. Congruent with Stern's (1992) assertion of personal nostalgia, "the locus of memory is the sentimentalized 'home' of one's childhood, recollected in adult life as the font of warmth, security, and love" (p. 16). Participants who shared this feeling of personal nostalgia are able to mentally return home and have the positive feelings that are associated with that home reintroduced into their current life.

Feelings of wonder and innocence, those that were personally experienced in the past, are available at a participant's fingertips just by speaking to one of the blacksmiths in Craftsman's Valley or riding on an attraction like Wild Eagle or Lightning Rod. What seemed to be most pervasive throughout the passages that linked to personal nostalgia is the forging of a connection to an individual. The opportunity to partake in experiences together is valued, such as Catherine's discussion regarding visiting the park with her sister. She is able to recapture a lost relationship through the experience of the park with her sister. This is also very impactful for Larry. Dollywood provides the artifacts, both visual and auditory, in which to connect with his father, who passed away over twenty years ago. The experience of Dollywood creates a conversation between Larry and his father, told through recreated shared experiences. Although not literal, the memories that are rekindled allow him to connect once again with his father. It is

a way to be reminded of the experiences Larry had with him and to keep that memory alive when the direct experience can no longer be had. This bodes true for Rhonda as well, as she is reminded of her relatives, like her father and grandfather, who epitomized much of the personality that is evoked through the themes and attractions at Dollywood.

For fans of Dolly Parton's career, likely Lesley, Molly, and a few of the other participants, Dollywood is a living environment in which to rekindle their memories of Parton's artistry, such as her films and music. When Molly sees a costume that Parton wore in *Straight Talk* or *Unlikely Angel*, she is reminded of her identity from the period in which she was first exposed to these films. Memories of childhood in the 1990s, ones that are filtered, are brought to the forefront of her mind. When she is in times of doubt or loneliness, these memories help soothe the stress that she faces. For Lesley, when hearing a Parton song in the park or visiting Chasing Rainbows, she reminisces on how Parton's work and persona influenced her own identity. It brings her back to all parts of her past in which she associates with Parton, such as what period in her life one of Parton's songs most spoke to her because it reflected what she was experiencing at that time in her life. Visiting Dollywood helps to reinforce those reminders of who she is today, seen through the lens of Parton's work.

Visitors are able to recreate various moments from childhood by visiting Dollywood. However, participants note that time periods that were desired, epitomized through values or certain historical practices, could also be engaged with at the park. This fits the characteristics of historical (or simulated or vicarious) nostalgia, in which individuals desire to engage with, or appreciate elements from, past periods that were never personally experienced. It is an expression of "the desire to retreat from contemporary life by returning to a time in the distant past viewed as superior to the present" (Stern, 1992, p. 13). Catherine's appreciation of seeing a

romanticized recreation of the environment in which her grandparents grew up reflects this. Although she has direct interaction with her grandparents, she was not alive to experience life in the 1950s, but sees certain elements that are desirable by what is represented at the park. By gaining that experience, she feels closer to those individuals in her life. The same could be said for Larry and Rhonda, who appreciate that their Appalachian heritage is represented positively at the park. They feel that they can connect to those relatives who had passed away even before they were born. It provides them an avenue to understand the way in which they might have lived in this area, and evokes nostalgia not necessarily for the literal time period itself, but for the relationship in which they might have had with those relatives and individuals.

Ideals and values, viewed through a nostalgic lens as stretching across regional boundaries and not just confined to 'Southern hospitality,' are also represented at the park. The passages in which Miss Lillian is mentioned highlight this sentiment. She is seen as epitome of these desired values. Not only does her interactions with guests represent a model for which individuals to treat each other, it creates a personification of the way in which people were believed to act during the time period her character represents. Dolly's own personal story, rising out of poverty through hard work and an entrepreneurial spirit, while also giving back to those less fortunate, are also represented and admired by visitors to Dollywood.

Collective nostalgia is also represented in the lived experience of visiting Dollywood. Certain historical periods are represented through the cultural artifacts used to theme the various areas. As Baker and Kennedy (1994) define it as, "a sentimental or bittersweet yearning for the past which represents a culture, a generation, or a nation...This is not an individualistic notion, rather, it is a collectivistic notion which makes the emotion more consistent between individuals of a similar background when it is presented in the same context" (p. 171). For example, the

presence of blacksmiths, wood carvers, lye soap makers, and glass blowers at Dollywood is considered representative of East Tennessee culture circa pre-1960. Carter, Teresa, and Gloria all view these elements as being authentic representations of the area during that era. As Carter states:

> *Dollywood is very genuine because it is representing the place that it actually is located in. These types of things would have been in this same area a few miles away from where the park is. It's not authentic in that it was actually there on that exact spot, but it's at least from the area. I really like she put the park where she did. She didn't have to have it here. It probably could have made more money or had more visitors if it were in a different location. But she stayed true to her roots to put it back here and she employed so many local people and craftsman to make a living. I think there is a level of authenticity that doesn't exist at other parks if they tried to replicate it.*

Carter sees the connection with the individuals of the area as being important to the authenticity and prosperity of the park. As he sees it, the symbols that illustrate this collective nostalgia are crucial in the acceptance and popularity of Dollywood. It speaks to its believed authenticity.

Looking to the future as an impending memory of the past characterizes anticipatory nostalgia. Gloria and Catherine both alluded to this notion of going to Dollywood to make new memories. There is this prediction that these new memories will be held and cherished; that they will be looked back upon fondly. Although these memories may be of the individual visiting the park on their own, the context in which they discussed this was within a unit, such as family or friends. Were something to change in the relationship between one of these individuals within their group, the visit to Dollywood serves as another way in which to connect to that individual. These notions fit the characterization of anticipatory nostalgia put forth by Batcho and Shikh

(2016) as "triggered by an imagined future...entails a conflict between an actual present and a hypothetical future one" (p. 75). However, Catherine and Gloria don't seem to view this as having to be necessarily negative. These new memories made with the group or individuals may be used for certain satisfactory purposes, or when that individual is no longer with them at a specific period of time, not necessarily meaning that the remembered individual as passed away or is no longer interacting with them in a permanent manner. These memories are used to bring about happiness when the person who is the source of that happiness may not be readily present during the given state.

Finally, consumed nostalgia is also evident in the narratives of the participants. As Cross (2015) notes, " people have long needed material and sensuous markers to recall and get 'in touch' with their social or family heritages" (p. 12). Those participants of Appalachian heritage, and even those who do not share those historical roots, see the experience of Dollywood as the ability to form a direct connection with the past, which is done through the recreation of ephemeral products and associations of that time. The ability to purchase jams and jellies in mason jars, lye soaps, China dolls, dulcimers, and rocking chairs all evoke this sense of nostalgia that Cross believes drives most nostalgic inclinations in modern American society. Larry's association of the 1956 Ford Thunderbird with his father, or Carter's citation of wassail and kettle corn and its essentialness to his Christmas traditions, are prime examples of the manifestation of this category of nostalgia. As Cross states, "today nostalgia binds together not community or families but scattered individuals around seemingly ephemeral things that are meaningful to them personally" (2015, p. 14).

There is one overarching theme that binds all of these stories together and is woven in each of the five categories presented. However, in the theorization of nostalgia it tends to be

ignored or overlooked. Much of the literature on nostalgia focuses on the individual notion of nostalgia. The focus is on how the individual remembers how he or she was or how he or she can connect to a past period in order to satisfy turmoil in his or her present situation (Belk, 1988, 1990; Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Batcho & Shikh, 2016; Cross, 2015; Havlena & Holak, 1991; Holbrook, 1989, 1993; Meyers, 2009; Stern, 1992). These scholars note that nostalgia is used as a coping mechanism in order to reinforce identity, to persevere through trying situations, and to satisfy the individual's identity as a singular association. However, as Holbrook and Schindler (1991) note, "nostalgia is deeper than that" (p. 332). What manifested in each of the participants' narratives was a desire to connect to others, directly and/or indirectly, whether it was with those who are currently living and active in the participant's life, those are currently living and inactive in the participant's life, or those who have long passed. This calls for a new interpretation of nostalgia: interpersonal nostalgia.

Implications for Theory: Interpersonal Nostalgia

The nostalgia that the participants discussed touched on many areas: heritage, escapism, identity, values, and connecting with others. However, what was evident in all of the narratives was a desire to rekindle or reconstruct relationships with other individuals through the past. What makes an individual nostalgic for the ephemeral, such as a vehicle from their past, or a drink from childhood, or for the songs from their teenage years, may not entirely be that he or she wishes to recreate a moment from the past in which these objects were present, but to be reminded of the individuals from these past moments who are represented through these objects.

In interpersonal nostalgia, an individual will look to the past nostalgically due to the relationships that he or she developed with other individuals during those periods in their own history, or because of the periods that were represented by those individuals in the relationship.

For example, an individual born in 1987 may be nostalgic for elements of the 1950s because those artifacts are associated with and representative of a person the individual has a positive relationship with who lived during those times and who values those elements. There is personal nostalgia ingrained in this understanding, since the individual personally engages in the relationship with the other individual. The nostalgia felt is a means in which to connect to that individual directly and indirectly. The individual directly interacts through conversations and experiences that foster growth within the relationship, creating more references in which to cull nostalgic memories. The individual indirectly interacts through current objects or experiences that recreate the direct involvements had together.

However, historical nostalgia is also apparent in interpersonal nostalgia. Although an individual may have never experienced a time period, they could be nostalgic for elements inherent in the representation of that time period due to interpersonal relationships forged with members who did live through that specific time period. The example of the individual born in 1987 who is nostalgic for the ephemeral of the 1950s is applicable in this scenario as well. That individual never directly experienced the 1950s, only recreations of certain elements of that time period, such as those at theme parks like Dollywood. However, because of his or her exposure to those elements through his relationships with others, it becomes a desirable means in which to bond with those individuals. The elements that are part of the collective nostalgia, such as consumable products or experiences that are representative of the given era, provide a means in which to connect the individual with those who did live during that time period. Even those who are no longer living, and who the nostalgic individual never met, their experiences can are nostalgically represented through experiences, like Dollywood, which provides a sense of understanding about those individuals for the nostalgic visitor.

Larry's narrative illustrates interpersonal nostalgia. Larry may appreciate certain cultural artifacts from his childhood and teenage years, or even from his adult years, but those that endure in his memory and are valued are those associated with the individuals of those time periods. He states that his appreciation for nostalgic elements found in products and experiences relate back to a time of social bonds:

> *It brings back those memories of when you grew up. There are things that I do now with certain people that I went to grammar school with and we do nostalgic things, like little traditions we had at school when we started in 1956. We still meet and we bring things from our childhood, usually food snacks. Coming from the South, I bring some Southern heritage up with me that is nostalgic, like RC and MoonPies. I try to bring things up that are like what we had as kids during that time period. You can still find that stuff at places like Mast General Store or at Dollywood.*

What makes these important for him are not the products and experiences themselves, but the interpersonal connections he had forged when those products and experiences appeared during that point in time. For example, the South, the 1956 Ford Thunderbird, and his Appalachian heritage are valued because of the relationship he had with his father. His reasoning for valuing these associations so strongly may be because of the relationship he had with his father, or the relationship that may have precluded him from a desired relationship with his father, in a sense, the relationship that he wish he had. This, in turn, drives him to pass along these nostalgic associations to his kin, hoping to keep those past relationships alive, as well as hoping to make amends for those he might not have realized through his own family. As he notes:

> *So that's where memories are triggered more and more and more. It was nice to be able to pass some of this heritage on. Also, to be able to come down and show my son some of*

> *the things where we were able to go up to Burnsville and I could show him all of the places that I went to as a kid. He was able to go to the cemetery and appreciate the heritage. I was able to take him to Chimney Rock. So now when we go to Dollywood it's nice to point out some things in Dollywood that remind me of my childhood, and then he can relate to it because he was able to experience some of those things through me. So not only do you rekindle your childhood memories, it's nice to say that I'm going to pass my childhood memories to my son, but then my son is going to have these memories that will be nostalgic for him that he can pass on to his children.*

So the objects, products, and experiences serve as the ways in which the relationship is shared, but it is the *relationship* that is yearned for.

Miss Lillian, mentioned in many of the narratives, is representative of interpersonal nostalgia as well. Although she is representative of a specific time period, such as the era of Dolly Parton's childhood days in the late-1940s and throughout the 1950s and the early-1960s, she is viewed upon nostalgically because of the relationships that she forges with the guests. As a living representation of Sevier County during that Post-World War II era, she is the embodiment of how it is believed the majority of individuals were. The ability to be as kind as her character is to guests is what is yearned for, not the actual time period. What is represented in that nostalgia is the treatment of individuals, whether representative of the time or not, but an embodied, living testament to that era. Gerald, Jacob, Dwight, Maggie, Lesley, Sean, Rhonda, Larry, and Gloria, in their narratives, all spoke extensively of her presence and hoped that people would learn from her. To them, she represented a reality of human decency that once existed in the masses, but now has been lost in modernity. Although her costume, her music, and her communication may be nostalgically remembered and admired, it is the relationship that it is

desired. It is her treatment of the individual that is missed; a treatment believed to be lost to the past.

Interpersonal nostalgia goes beyond just longing for a period in history or to regress to a previous identity. Interpersonal nostalgia is about building relationships with individuals, with understanding the role of individuals in one's heritage, and passing along what has been lived and reconstructed for others and future generations to experience. The experience of going to Dollywood is not just personal, historical, collective, anticipatory, or consumed nostalgia; it is all of those, but tied to interpersonal relationships that are manifested through those nostalgic representations. Dollywood is a place in which interpersonal nostalgia is realized through time spent with each other and time spent in a romanticized past.

Implications for Management: Dollywood's Future Is in the Past

The findings in this study provide insights for the management of Dollywood, especially regarding attraction selection and upgrade opportunities. This study provides a means into understanding the wants and desires of guests. What are the expectations of a visit to Dollywood? What do guests go to Dollywood to experience compared to other travel destinations? By understanding the ways in which guests interpret and understand the lived experience of visiting Dollywood, this allows management to decide which attractions, amenities, entertainment, and décor could be upgraded for future enjoyment and which ones are iconic and should not be replaced. Also, it provides insight into what benefits and features of a visit to Dollywood should be communicated in various marketing communication tactics.

Many of the participants noted that entering a nostalgic world was an expectation, and desired outcome, of visiting Dollywood. All agreed that sweeping changes to the park to take

away the spirit of East Tennessee heritage and the time period reconstructed would destroy the appeal of the park. As Jacob noted:

> *I think they got their theming down. They do a really good job with that and that whole East Tennessee-feel is one reason I come here. It's easy to wish for things, but it costs so much money to build it. I think they have a really good variety of rides.*

Larry also echoes:

> *Sometimes smaller is better. You get too big, and once that happens, it's so big you then have to turn around and have to look at this big clientele and how do we please all of these people because it has gotten so big. So I would say to Dollywood not to get too big, remember your clientele that comes here, keep your roots, and stick to what you believe.*

Finally, Gloria states:

> *I think that the attractions that they have, in terms of the thrill rides, I think that is attractive to the younger generation. Even using some of those older themes, even though I didn't have a direct interaction with the period, I find an appreciation in it and I think there are others who do and will too. It'll serve as an escape from their hectic day.*

Providing an escape from the ordinary, whether through heritage or fantasy, is appealing. A key to this is also presenting these worlds in clean, safe, high-quality environments. Nearly all of the participants felt that Dollywood provided a high-quality experience for guests in terms of cleanliness, attraction and entertainment selection, guest service, and affordability. Many felt that it may not have been equal what is provided at the Disney theme parks, but that the gap was not as large as with other theme parks and amusement parks when compared to the Walt Disney World Resort or the Disneyland Resort. As Carter states:

Really in the last fifteen years or so it's gotten to be really nice and professionally done. I want to say near-Disney quality. Except for maybe Blazing Fury, but that's the charm of that ride. I think they purposely keep it a little bit rinky-dink.

Jacob echoes:

Disney and Universal are on a whole other level, but I'd say Dollywood is about as close as you could get without being them.

The nostalgia represented at Dollywood is based on that of living individuals and of a culture. Dolly Parton's stories came to life through her songs, creating a picture of her Tennessee mountain home, shared with others who also experienced that heritage or were accepting of the values exhibited through her story. However, Dolly Parton is currently in her seventies. The youngest baby boomers are currently fifty-three years of age. As transportation, communication, and travel evolve in society, does the appreciation for the past last for future generations? Where is that past located as well? Nostalgia for young families in 2018 is located in the 1980s and 1990s, which is not as thoroughly represented at the park as other time periods. Also, what is nostalgic for one individual may be meaningless for another, especially if certain cultural artifacts and stories are not in common between the individuals. Will this hurt Dollywood's appeal to millennial families? Maggie had strong opinions on the future of Dollywood:

I think one of the things that they need pretty desperately if they are going to slowly move into the theme park realm rather than amusement park realm, is that story. I think Dollywood needs to be a little bit more fantastic. There needs to be a little bit more that you need to imagine, and it all needs to tie together. The mill is such a cool central piece of the park, but it's just there to make bread. I really feel like they have a lot of

> *opportunity to create a thematic presence that they haven't yet. I think we kind of brush it off as a cheesy thing to have stories for everything, but I think if it all comes together, it is really powerful. Something we noticed was an absence of a track-kind of ride. If they created a twenty-minute track-ride about the history of Dolly, I'd probably ride it ten times a day. I think that is big and I think that's one of the things that prevents them from crossing over into true 'theme park world' is that there are really no conceptual rides.*

Maggie sees the lack of a cohesive, explicit story at Dollywood as a detriment to attracting individuals who seek to craft those memories.

Disney relies on a model of synergy, in which a holistic effort is put into promoting a franchise through numerous channels (Santoli, 2015). For example, one of Disney's animated films, such as *Frozen*, is promoted through traditional and nontraditional advertising channels, such as broadcast, print, out-of-home, digital, and social. This will then extend to merchandizing tie-ins, such as apparel, toys, furniture, and food. Interactive opportunities at the Disney theme parks, such as character meet-and-greets and attractions, are designed to build affinity toward that franchise and to create an immersive experience. A sequel film or other supporting programs, like a television special or a Broadway production, continue to provide more opportunities to connect with the audience. Over time, this franchise becomes part of the popular culture of that generation, a part of its collective nostalgia. Those children remember what relationships were forged during that interaction with the franchise. Did the child's mother or father bring them to see the film when it first premiered in theaters? Did the child and his or her social group act out different scenes from the film together? As interpersonal nostalgia illustrates, this may influence the child look back fondly on not just the film, but also those relationships forged, possibly inspiring future action to pass those along to future generations.

Although Dollywood does not rely on franchised characters, there is a possibility for the park to follow this model.

Dolly Parton is known for her charitable work, especially that geared toward youth (Miller, 2015). As explored earlier in the study, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library promotes youth literacy by providing books to children every month up until their fifth birthday. This program reaches over one million children all over the world, and recently, Parton just delivered her one hundred millionth book (Pao, 2018). Educators and reading specialists select books that are developmentally appropriate for each year of a child's life. The books expose children and parents to themes and areas that they may not have chosen on their own. As Pao notes, "examples include a bilingual English-Spanish version of *Just One More* or Dolly Parton's children's book, *I Am A Rainbow*, which uses colors to help kids talk about their feelings." Parton has also authored a second children's book based on her 1971 song, "Coat of Many Colors." By participating in this program, children are not only learning to appreciate the value of literacy and gaining a love of reading, but they are also building bonds with a parent, guardian, or whomever is reading to him or her, creating opportunities for nostalgic reflection. This could be expanded.

Another way in which to engage young children, while also providing enrichment, is through visual and auditory content, such as a television or digital program. In 2017, Parton released an album of children's music entitled, *I Believe in You*, to benefit the Imagination Library (Watts, 2017). As part of the effort to promote the album, she also released a series of animated music videos for many of the songs on the album (See Appendix E for screenshots from the music video for the song "I Believe in You"). Taking creative inspiration from these

videos, Parton could create a children's television program to air on Public Broadcast Television, especially in Tennessee, in the vein of *Curious George* or *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*.

The show would provide educational enrichment for young children, as well a means for which children can connect with Dollywood. Taking place in the Smoky Mountains, Parton (or her cartoon likeness) would introduce each episode, describing the theme or lesson to be featured. Each episode would tackle an issue important to young children, such as appreciation for nature, the value of hard work, or anti-bullying, similar to the themes of the songs that appear on *I Believe in You*. Different locations explored in the show would reflect the themed areas found at Dollywood, such as Craftsman's Valley, Timber Canyon, and Rivertown Junction. Characters that are introduced in the story would be original, but could also be named after the individuals who appear in her songs, such as Joshua, Jolene, and Applejack. As children grow up with these characters and these stories, they are drawn to experience the world in which they see in the show, which happens at Dollywood. Even those children who do not share Appalachian heritage would be attracted to Dollywood because it is the manifestation of the fantastical world that they enjoy being part of through the various media channels, similar to how the park provides a sense of wonder and escapism to some of the participants interviewed in the study. Adults, wanting to preserve the bond that has been created through viewing the program with their children, see this as an opportunity to create memories. As these children age into adulthood and have their own families, this show becomes part of their collective nostalgia. Remembering the pleasant memories had with their families, these now adults want to continue this tradition with their own children, and they do that not only by watching the show, but also bringing them to Dollywood. Stories in which to connect the various areas of the park are also provided through the show. Parton's legacy, her philanthropic endeavors and her desire to

educate children, as well as her music and business interests, are now passed on to the next generation in this interpersonal nostalgic circle.

What would have to be evaluated is how this would impact guests who savor the thrills of the various attractions. Would this alienate those guests and leave the park as only appealing to families with young children? More research would be needed to evaluate that potential caveat.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to uncover the meaning that is made through the lived experience of visiting Dollywood. The findings of the study indicate that nostalgia plays an important role in the lived experience, as it provides meaning to the relationships between individuals that are valued. Interpersonal nostalgia, or the concept that an individual will look to the past nostalgically due to the relationships that he or she developed with other individuals during those periods in their own history or because of the periods that were represented by those individuals in the relationship, is seen as an interpretation of this lived experience. Thus, the management of Dollywood should look for ways in which to provide experiences that will evoke interpersonal nostalgic inclinations.

This study is important because it reveals an understanding of nostalgia that has not been explored in previous literature. While elements of personal, historical, consumed, collective, and anticipatory nostalgia may be present in the experience of nostalgia, few scholars have looked to illuminate how relationships between individuals, and not just cultural artifacts, reveal this phenomenon, especially in the context of tourism. These findings are valuable not only to the management of Dollywood, but also to scholars studying the phenomenon of nostalgia.

Limitations

The study was subjected to limitations. All participants were from a similar racial background. Those individuals from more diverse background may have provided different insights into the nostalgic evocations felt at Dollywood. Also, these findings were specific to the lived experience of visiting Dollywood. Other theme parks, both destination and local, may evoke different feelings and experiences based on their theming. Finally, although Season

Passholders, due to financial investment, may be considered the most loyal guests of the park, there is no guarantee that these guests are anymore knowledgeable about the resort, or more in-touch with their observations, than other types of guests to the park.

Implications for Future Research

There are numerous areas for future research regarding nostalgia. Larry noted how the nostalgia he experienced at Dollywood felt different from that felt at the various Disney theme parks he has visited. Delving deeper into the narratives of those who have visited the Disney theme parks, as well as Dollywood, may reveal greater insight into the phenomenon of nostalgia and its role in those lived experiences. Future research could also delve deeper into generational-specific aspects of the lived experience and the role of interpersonal nostalgia to explain the ways in which individuals from different generations use interpersonal nostalgia. Also, it would be valuable to understand how diverse audiences who frequent Dollywood, and also those who do not but are familiar with the park, interpret the various aspects that are communicated through the brand that is Dollywood.

Much of the research regarding nostalgia is taken from a quantitative approach. The use of qualitative methods may provide unique insight into the role that the phenomenon plays in individuals'' understanding and meaning-making of the world around them. By examining the narratives of study participants, new insights may emerge.

Final Thoughts

Does looking to the past provide for a better tomorrow? Using nostalgia as a coping mechanism has not been without its fair share of critics. It is seen as a mechanism that reinforces gender roles and the racial social hierarchy (Klugman, 1995; Kuenz, 1995; Waldrep, 1995; Willis, 1995a, 1995b), contributes to depression (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989),

romanticizes a period of history while ignoring its perils and injustices (Rosaldo, 1989), trivializes society into a set of commodities (Meyers, 2009), and is "a form of sentimentalization in which people retreat to the security blanket of childhood and thereby avoid the risk-taking necessary to achieve maturity" (Stern, 1992, p. 20). However, it has also been found to provide relief to those in transitional times (Davis, 1979), and to provide new insights and understandings into how individuals make sense of the world. Nostalgia can also allow individuals to come to terms with their past in order to be better prepared for the future, provide clearer insight into the present, and prioritize building new or rekindling old relationships. Nostalgia can be evoked in order to remind the individual of what he or she has been afforded in life. Most importantly, if it is the impetus for an individual to treat all they come into contact with just a little bit better, it may not be so evil after all.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL



November 06, 2017

Andrew David Anglin,
UTK - College of Communication and Inf - Advertising/Public Relations

Re: UTK IRB-17-04068-XP
Study Title: The Past That Never Was and Always Will Be: Feelings of Nostalgia Exhibited by Theme Park Guests

Dear Andrew David Anglin:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for the above referenced project. It determined that your application is eligible for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), categories (6) and (7). The IRB has reviewed these materials and determined that they do comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval by the IRB of your application (version 1.2) as submitted, including Informed Consent Form for ADA Dissertation (English) - (Version 1.2), Interview Protocol for ADA Dissertation - (Version 1.0), and the Recruitment Blurb for ADA Dissertation - (Version 1.1). The listed documents have been dated and stamped IRB approved. Approval of this study will be valid from November 06, 2017 to November 05, 2018.
**** Please be sure to use the IRB stamped approved versions as the IRB office added an important sentence to your Informed Consent form.**

In accord with 45 CFR 46.116(d), informed consent is waived -OR- may be altered, with the cover statement used in lieu of an informed consent interview. The requirement to secure a signed consent form is waived under 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2). Willingness of the subject to participate will constitute adequate documentation of consent.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB. Any

revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, re-approval of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,

Colleen P. Gilrane

Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.
Chair

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697 865-974-7400 fax irb.utk.edu

BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.
Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT
The Past That Never Was and Always Will Be:
Feelings of Nostalgia Exhibited by Theme Park Guests

INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in a research study. Through one-on-one, in-depth interviews, this study illuminates the feelings that guests associate with experiencing a regional theme park in East Tennessee – Dollywood. The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding into the feelings and experiences of regular visitors to Dollywood.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

In order to investigate the phenomenon described previously, interviews conducted in person and/or via digital communication will be analyzed. You will be asked questions regarding your previous visits to Dollywood, what memories those destinations evoke, and how you felt during your time at this theme park. In order to be eligible to participate in the study you must be a current or former Dollywood season passholder (Season, Gold, or Super Gold). The interview should take no longer than an hour. The interview will be audio-recorded in case I need to listen to it later to clarify something from the notes. This recording will not be shared with others and will be destroyed at the end of this research. I will transcribe the recordings in order to analyze the data collected. The information transcribed will remain confidential through the replacement of identification indicators with aliases.

RISKS
By participating in this study, there are no foreseeable risks other than those encountered in everyday life.

BENEFITS
Although nostalgia's role in theme park appeal has been explored, these academic studies tend to focus on the largest theme parks, such as the Walt Disney World Resort and the Disneyland Resort, or examine historical amusement destinations like Coney Island. Little exists on how nostalgia manifests for guests of smaller, regional theme parks, especially Dollywood, and how the operators of those theme parks create a nostalgic experience for those guests. Dollywood's nostalgic theming has been acknowledged, but research is lacking regarding guests' interpretations of their experiences and the role that nostalgia plays. Finally, the elements at a theme park that a visitor interacts with, such as the attractions and theming, serve as brand touch points, elements in which the brand creates an emotional connection with the guest, which may allow for continued consumption/experience of the brand. By understanding how visitors interpret their experiences at the destination, operators can gain a greater understanding of what elements prove valuable and appealing in communicating to the targeted group of tourists.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which

could link you to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Andrew D. Anglin, at aanglin1@vols.utk.edu, at:

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
College of Communication & Information
School of Advertising and Public Relations, Office 401J
476 Communications Building
1345 Circle Park Drive
Knoxville, TN 37996-0343

or the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Eric Haley, at (865) 974-3048, haley@utk.edu, and:

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
College of Communication & Information
School of Advertising and Public Relations
476 Communications Building
1345 Circle Park Drive
Knoxville, TN 37996-0343

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research & Engagement Compliance Officer at (865) 974-7697 or utkirb@utk.edu.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed you data will be destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study and that I am 18 years of age or older.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
The Past That Never Was and Always Will Be:
Feelings of Nostalgia Exhibited by Theme Park Guests

Introduction and Basic Points
Good [morning/afternoon/evening], as you may know, my name is Andrew D. Anglin, and I am a PhD. candidate at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville studying advertising. I am working on a project that focuses on uncovering the feelings that guests experience related to visiting Dollywood. Your insights will help me to understand more about the meaning that individuals create by visiting the park and how they interpret their experiences of Dollywood.

(*Repeat these points if individuals have questions about the consent forms they have signed)*

Every opinion is valuable and I only want to know your thoughts and opinions.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You may choose to skip a question or stop the interview at any time and for any reason with no penalty, especially if you feel uncomfortable with the question or subject. Your information will stay secure. I will not share your personal information, including your name, with anyone else. Unless you prefer otherwise, your name will not be linked to the information that you provide during the interview.

This interview is being audio-recorded in case I need to listen to it later to clarify something from the notes. This recording will not be shared with others and will be destroyed at the end of this research.

The interview should take no longer than an hour.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Guide

1) When did you first visit Dollywood?
2) Tell me what it is like when you go to Dollywood.
    a. What makes Dollywood an appealing place for you to visit?
    b. Who tends to make up your party when you go?
3) What are some of your favorite things to do at Dollywood?
4) Tell me a little bit about what and how you feel when you are at Dollywood.
    a. What were the specific moments during your visit that brought about these feelings?
5) Describe some of your most vivid memories of visiting Dollywood.
    a. Does any of the theming (Jukebox Junction, Craftsmen's Valley, Country Fair, etc.) cause you to reflect on the past? Why or why not?
    b. Do any of the offerings (rides, attractions, shows, entertainment, festivals, shopping, dining, etc.) cause you to reflect on the past? Why or why not?
6) Could you recommend any other current or former passholders who would be interested in participating in one of these interviews?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SUPPORT MATERIALS







START NEXT YEAR'S FUN NOW!

Upgrade Today's Paid Admission To A 2017 Season Pass!

AS LOW AS $27 (Avg. tax) When buying 4 or more. Dollywood 2017 SEASON PASS

Buy at any ticket window.

2017 SOUVENIR MUG

2 MUGS FOR $21.99

$.99 Fountain Drink Refills

$1.99 Refills Frozen or Hot Drinks

No other discounts apply. Good through 2017 season.

MAKE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EASY!

Use our free PACKAGE PICKUP for all of your merchandise purchases.

Plan Your Holiday Stay With Us!

Dollywood's DreamMore Resort and Spa

Dollywood.com

Official Sponsors

Coca-Cola

Humana

A Health Partner For Life

"Coca-Cola" is a registered trademark of The Coca-Cola Company.

SHOW SCHEDULE

Dollywood's Smoky Mountain CHRISTMAS

Presented by Humana

November 5 - January 1

(Operating Days & Hours Vary)

It's a Wonderful Life

NEW THIS CHRISTMAS!

AMERICA'S BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT

9 YEARS IN-A-ROW!

- Amusement Today -

Award-Winning Entertainment

Appalachian Christmas - Celebrate an acoustic Christmas at the Back Porch Theater with Appalachian Christmas.

Chasing Rainbows - Dolly's museum is filled with the thousands of memories that mark the life and career of this successful singer, songwriter, actress and businesswoman.

Christmas in the Smokies - This family favorite returns to its traditional home at D.P.'s Celebrity Theater. Celebrate the joy of the season while a cast of singers and dancers performs hometown holiday favorites while accompanied by a band of live musicians!

Costner and Sons Magic Shop - Mountain Magic and Novelty Specials.

Holly Jolly™ Junction - A magical area where festive fun awaits your family. Here, meet Rudolph and his friends, create a special Christmas photo souvenir, decorate cookies, play games and more!

It's A Wonderful Life - Based on the timeless holiday story of love and generosity, small town businessman George Bailey discovers the true value of life, family and friends with a little help from his guardian angel, Clarence.

Kingdom Heirs: The Heart of Christmas - Celebrate a Southern Gospel Christmas as the Kingdom Heirs keep your spirits high with your favorite Christmas hymns and songs.

Miss Lillian - As proprietress of Miss Lillian's Chicken House, she makes the tastiest fried chicken you'll find anywhere.

MistleTones - Four lovely ladies take old Christmas standards to new heights from stage to stage. The MistleTones are going to be another HUGE part of Dollywood's Award-Winning Entertainment!

My People - Featuring Dolly's brother Randy along with several other family members, the cast of My People shares songs of the family's strong faith, their deep love for the Smoky Mountains and their steadfast belief in their sister Dolly.

O' Holy Night - A little girl looks for an angel; three shepherds follow a star. They all find their way to the heart of "The Christmas Story."

Parade of Many Colors - This new parade celebrates the fun, faith, family and harmony of the holiday season. Whimsical floats, interactive characters and a few other surprises help spread cheer throughout Dollywood.

The Robert F. Thomas Chapel - Dolly's Christmas Chapel hosts worship services at 5:30 pm each Sunday throughout the festival.

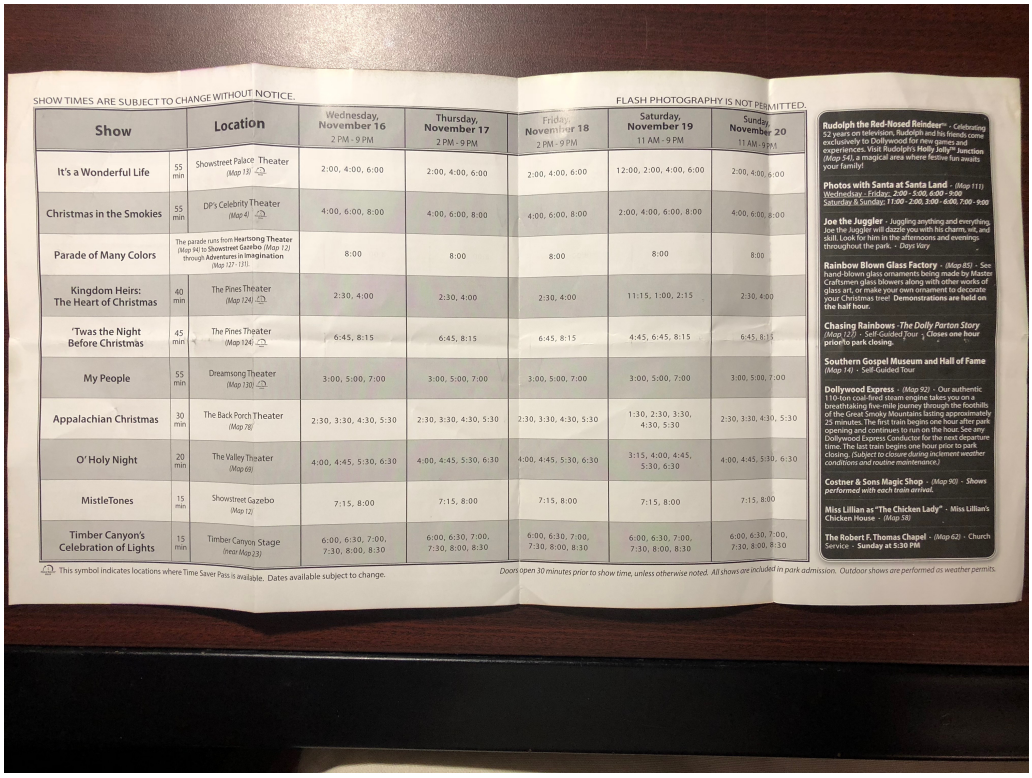
Santa Land - A whimsical workshop where the smallest guests can share their wish list with Kris Kringle.

Timber Canyon's Celebration of Lights - Each night thousands of lights synchronize with holiday music to transform our Timber Canyon stage into a "seasonal symphony for the senses."

'Twas the Night Before Christmas - A family finds its own Christmas miracle with the help of a mysterious, white-bearded stranger.

INTRODUCING PARADE OF MANY COLORS

See Parade route on map.



SHOW TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY IS NOT PERMITTED.

Show		Location	Wednesday, November 16 2 PM - 9 PM	Thursday, November 17 2 PM - 9 PM	Friday, November 18 2 PM - 9 PM	Saturday, November 19 11 AM - 9 PM	Sunday, November 20 11 AM - 9 PM
It's a Wonderful Life	55 min	Showstreet Palace Theater (Map 13)	2:00, 4:00, 6:00	2:00, 4:00, 6:00	2:00, 4:00, 6:00	12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00	2:00, 4:00, 6:00
Christmas in the Smokies	55 min	DP's Celebrity Theater (Map 4)	4:00, 6:00, 8:00	4:00, 6:00, 8:00	4:00, 6:00, 8:00	2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00	4:00, 6:00, 8:00
Parade of Many Colors		The parade runs from Heritsong Theater (Map 94) to Showstreet Gazebo (Map 12) through Adventures in Imagination (Map 127 - 131).	8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00	8:00
Kingdom Heirs: The Heart of Christmas	40 min	The Pines Theater (Map 124)	2:30, 4:00	2:30, 4:00	2:30, 4:00	11:15, 1:00, 2:15	2:30, 4:00
'Twas the Night Before Christmas	45 min	The Pines Theater (Map 124)	6:45, 8:15	6:45, 8:15	6:45, 8:15	4:45, 6:45, 8:15	6:45, 8:15
My People	55 min	Dreamsong Theater (Map 130)	3:00, 5:00, 7:00	3:00, 5:00, 7:00	3:00, 5:00, 7:00	3:00, 5:00, 7:00	3:00, 5:00, 7:00
Appalachian Christmas	30 min	The Back Porch Theater (Map 78)	2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30	2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30	2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30	1:30, 2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30	2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30
O' Holy Night	20 min	The Valley Theater (Map 69)	4:00, 4:45, 5:30, 6:30	4:00, 4:45, 5:30, 6:30	4:00, 4:45, 5:30, 6:30	3:15, 4:00, 4:45, 5:30, 6:30	4:00, 4:45, 5:30, 6:30
MistleTones	15 min	Showstreet Gazebo (Map 12)	7:15, 8:00	7:15, 8:00	7:15, 8:00	7:15, 8:00	7:15, 8:00
Timber Canyon's Celebration of Lights	15 min	Timber Canyon Stage (near Map 23)	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30	6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30

This symbol indicates locations where Time Saver Pass is available. Dates available subject to change.

Doors open 30 minutes prior to show time, unless otherwise noted. All shows are included in park admission. Outdoor shows are performed as weather permits.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer® - Celebrating 52 years on television, Rudolph and his friends come exclusively to Dollywood for new games and experiences. Visit Rudolph's Holly Jolly™ Junction (Map 54), a magical area where festive fun awaits your family!

Photos with Santa at Santa Land - (Map 111)
Wednesday - Friday: 2:00 - 5:00, 6:00 - 9:00
Saturday & Sunday: 11:00 - 2:00, 3:00 - 6:00, 7:00 - 9:00

Joe the Juggler - Juggling anything and everything, Joe the Juggler will dazzle you with his charm, wit, and skill. Look for him in the afternoons and evenings throughout the park. - Days Vary

Rainbow Blown Glass Factory - (Map 85) - See hand-blown glass ornaments being made by Master Craftsmen glass blowers along with other works of glass art, or make your own ornament to decorate your Christmas tree! **Demonstrations are held on the half hour.**

Chasing Rainbows - *The Dolly Parton Story* (Map 127) - Self-Guided Tour - *Closes one hour prior to park closing.*

Southern Gospel Museum and Hall of Fame (Map 14) - Self-Guided Tour

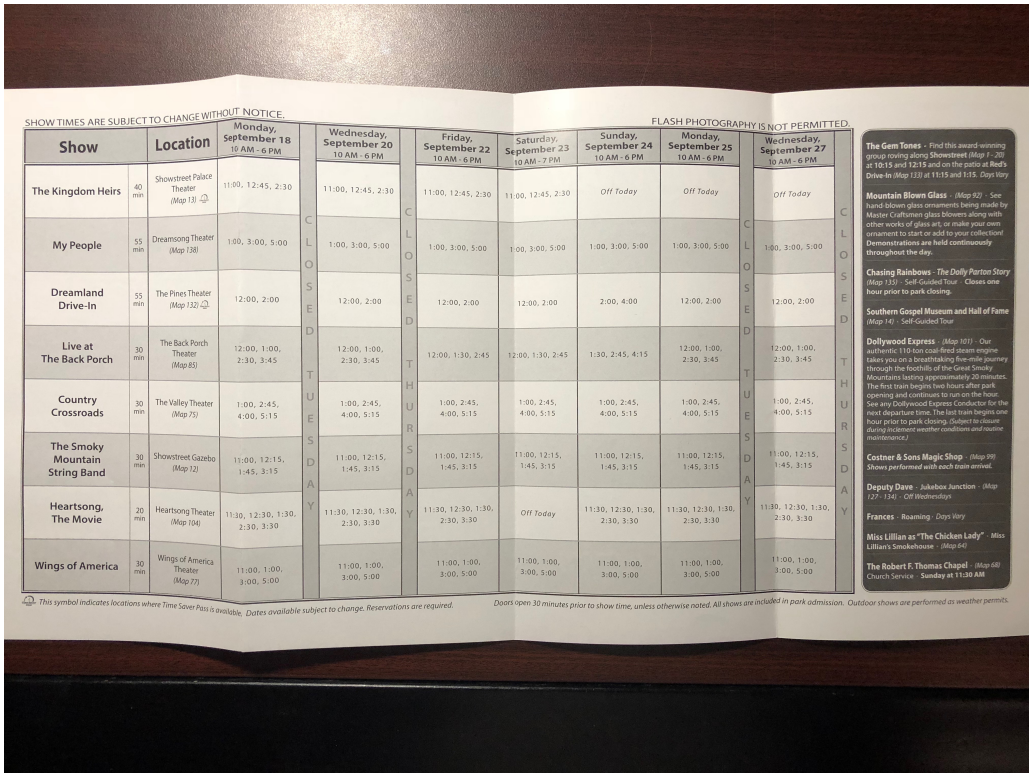
Dollywood Express - (Map 92) - Our authentic 110-ton coal-fired steam engine takes you on a breathtaking five-mile journey through the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains lasting approximately 25 minutes. The first train begins one hour after park opening and continues to run on the hour. See any Dollywood Express Conductor for the next departure time. The last train begins one hour prior to park closing. *(Subject to closure during inclement weather conditions and routine maintenance.)*

Costner & Sons Magic Shop - (Map 90) - *Shows performed with each train arrival.*

Miss Lillian as "The Chicken Lady" - Miss Lillian's Chicken House - (Map 58)

The Robert F. Thomas Chapel - (Map 62) - Church Service - **Sunday at 5:30 PM**





SHOW TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY IS NOT PERMITTED.

Show		Location	Monday, September 18 10 AM - 6 PM	Wednesday, September 20 10 AM - 6 PM	Friday, September 22 10 AM - 6 PM	Saturday, September 23 10 AM - 7 PM	Sunday, September 24 10 AM - 6 PM	Monday, September 25 10 AM - 6 PM	Wednesday, September 27 10 AM - 6 PM
The Kingdom Heirs	40 min	Showstreet Palace Theater (Map 13)	11:00, 12:45, 2:30	11:00, 12:45, 2:30	11:00, 12:45, 2:30	11:00, 12:45, 2:30	Off Today	Off Today	Off Today
My People	55 min	Dreamsong Theater (Map 138)	1:00, 3:00, 5:00	1:00, 3:00, 5:00	1:00, 3:00, 5:00	1:00, 3:00, 5:00	1:00, 3:00, 5:00	1:00, 3:00, 5:00	1:00, 3:00, 5:00
Dreamland Drive-In	55 min	The Pines Theater (Map 132)	12:00, 2:00	12:00, 2:00	12:00, 2:00	12:00, 2:00	2:00, 4:00	12:00, 2:00	12:00, 2:00
Live at The Back Porch	30 min	The Back Porch Theater (Map 85)	12:00, 1:00, 2:30, 3:45	12:00, 1:00, 2:30, 3:45	12:00, 1:30, 2:45	12:00, 1:30, 2:45	1:30, 2:45, 4:15	12:00, 1:00, 2:30, 3:45	12:00, 1:00, 2:30, 3:45
Country Crossroads	30 min	The Valley Theater (Map 75)	1:00, 2:45, 4:00, 5:15	1:00, 2:45, 4:00, 5:15	1:00, 2:45, 4:00, 5:15	1:00, 2:45, 4:00, 5:15	1:00, 2:45, 4:00, 5:15	1:00, 2:45, 4:00, 5:15	1:00, 2:45, 4:00, 5:15
The Smoky Mountain String Band	30 min	Showstreet Gazebo (Map 12)	11:00, 12:15, 1:45, 3:15	11:00, 12:15, 1:45, 3:15	11:00, 12:15, 1:45, 3:15	11:00, 12:15, 1:45, 3:15	11:00, 12:15, 1:45, 3:15	11:00, 12:15, 1:45, 3:15	11:00, 12:15, 1:45, 3:15
Heartsong, The Movie	20 min	Heartsong Theater (Map 104)	11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30	11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30	11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30	Off Today	11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30	11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30	11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30
Wings of America	30 min	Wings of America Theater (Map 77)	11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00	11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00	11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00	11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00	11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00	11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00	11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00

CLOSED TUESDAY

CLOSED THURSDAY

CLOSED TUESDAY

CLOSED THURSDAY

This symbol indicates locations where Time Saver Pass is available. Dates available subject to change. Reservations are required.

Doors open 30 minutes prior to show time, unless otherwise noted. All shows are included in park admission. Outdoor shows are performed as weather permits.

The Gem Tones - Find this award-winning group roving along Showstreet (Map F - 20) at 10:15 and 12:15 and on the patio at Red's Drive-In (Map 133) at 11:15 and 1:15. Days Vary

Mountain Blown Glass - (Map 82) - See hand-blown glass ornaments being made by Master Craftsmen glass blowers along with other works of glass art, or make your own ornament to start or add to your collection! Demonstrations are held continuously throughout the day.

Chasing Rainbows - *The Dolly Parton Story* (Map 135) - Self-Guided Tour - Closes one hour prior to park closing.

Southern Gospel Museum and Hall of Fame (Map 14) - Self-Guided Tour

Dollywood Express - (Map 101) - Our authentic 110-ton coal-fired steam engine takes you on a breathtaking five-mile journey through the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains lasting approximately 20 minutes. The first train begins two hours after park opening and continues to run on the hour. See any Dollywood Express Conductor for the next departure time. The last train begins one hour prior to park closing. (Subject to closure during inclement weather conditions and routine maintenance.)

Costner & Sons Magic Shop - (Map 99) Shows performed with each train arrival.

Deputy Dave - Jukebox Junction - (Map 127 - 134) - Off Wednesdays

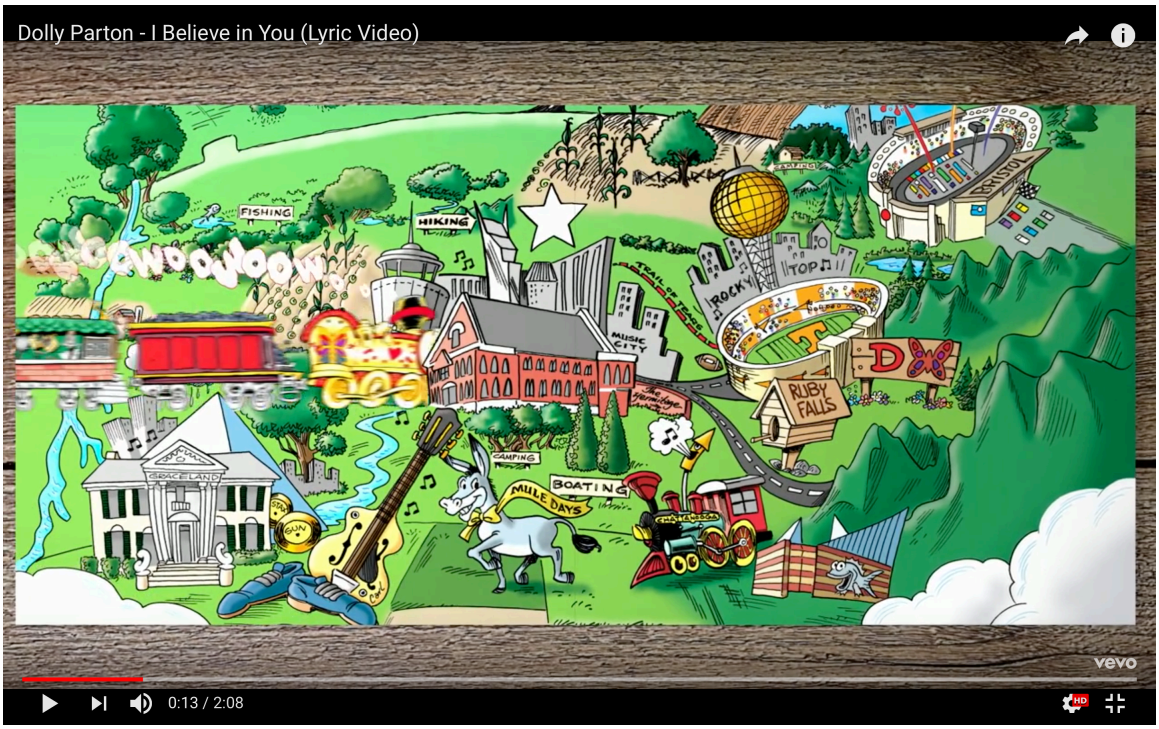
Frances - Roaming - Days Vary

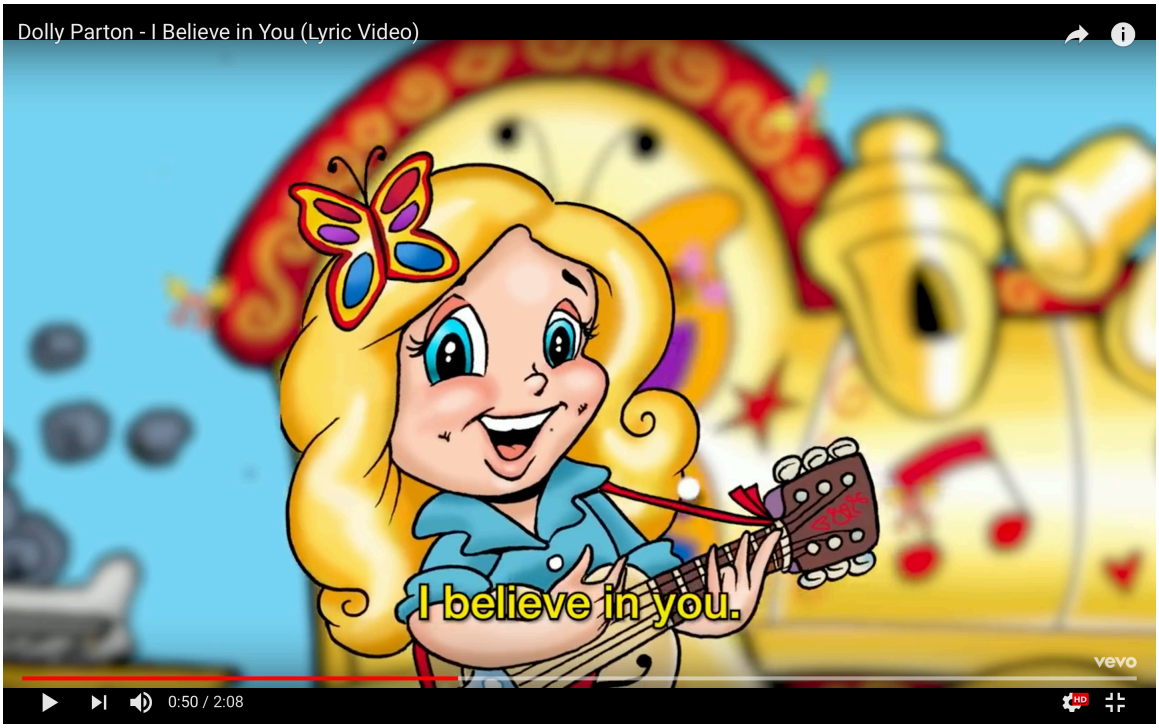
Miss Lillian as "The Chicken Lady" - Miss Lillian's Smokehouse - (Map 64)

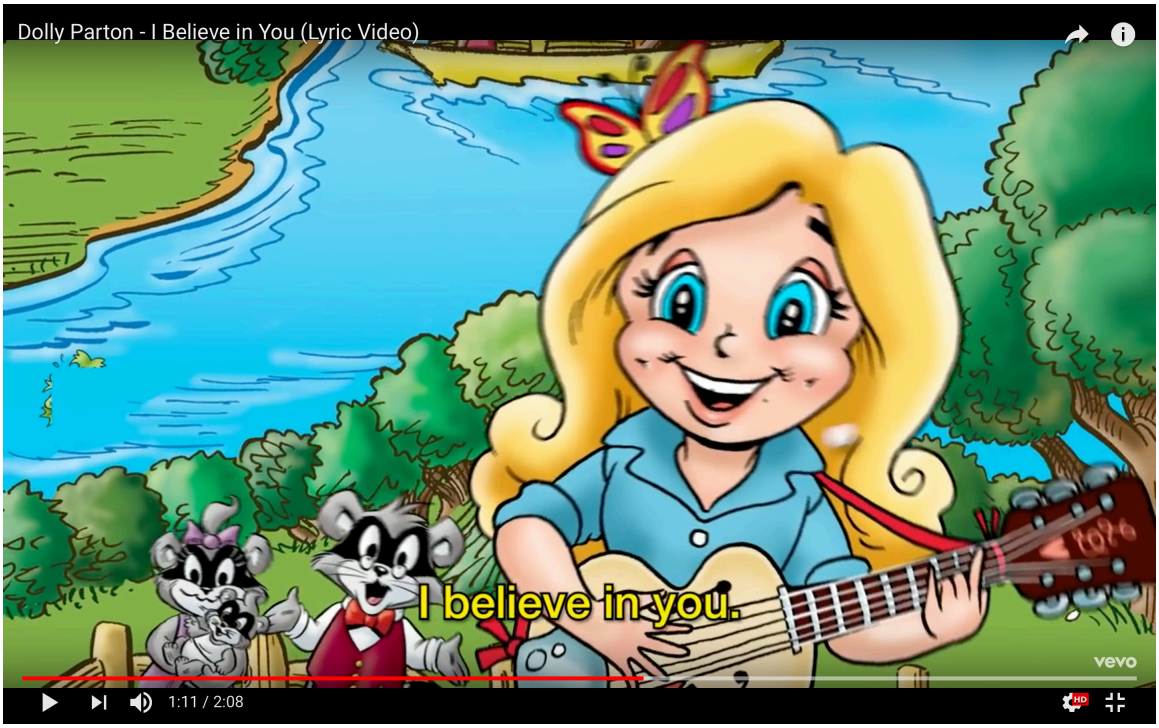
The Robert F. Thomas Chapel - (Map 68) Church Service - Sunday at 11:30 AM

APPENDIX E

MUSIC VIDEO SCREENSHOTS






Dolly Parton - I Believe in You (Lyric Video)
I believe in you.
vevo
1:11 / 2:08

VITA

Andrew David Anglin is from Glen Ridge, New Jersey. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration from Furman University in 2010. In 2012, he received a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Mississippi. In 2013, Mr. Anglin received a Master of Business Administration specializing in Marketing and Luxury Brand Management from INSEEC in Paris, France. From there, he received a Master of Arts in Journalism specializing in Integrated Marketing Communications from the University of Mississippi in 2014. Prior to pursuing his doctorate, Mr. Anglin was part of the Marketing and Sales Strategy team for The Walt Disney Company.