UF STUDENT FINDS HER RESEARCH NICHÉ AND WINS AWARD AFTER AWARD

Sexual Risk-Taking in Tourism is a Hot Topic

Gainesville, FL -- Most University of Florida students studying in the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management are outstanding and Yelyzaveta “Liza” Berdychevsky is no exception. A Ph.D. student in her final year of study, Liza recently won the Thomas and Ruth Rivers International Scholarship Award for the 2012 World Leisure Congress and the best student paper award sponsored by the Academy of Leisure Sciences for the 2012 Leisure Research Symposium, NRPA Congress.

The Rivers scholarship is awarded every two years in conjunction with the World Leisure Congress and covers the cost of registration, accommodations, and transportation. World Leisure, a United Nations consultant, is dedicated to improving citizens’ well-being through the positive use of leisure and recreation.

Liza’s submitted paper is actually a qualitative study from the first phase of her dissertation. The paper draws upon the phenomenology of women’s sexual risk-taking in tourism and is co-authored by Liza’s advisor, Dr. Heather Gibson. Liza’s interest in sexual behavior in tourism was first sparked during her MBA program at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. Liza was interested in finding her own research niche and wanted to see how various aspects of tourists’ behavior might change in anonymous tourism environments where everyday rules of behavior may not apply or apply differently. “Given that sexual behavior has been historically subject to the variety of taboos, prejudices, and gendered double standards, this niche is particularly appropriate for investigating potential changes and risk-taking in tourists’ behavior,” says Liza. In turn, one of Dr. Gibson’s areas of expertise is in tourist roles and risk-taking and she encouraged Liza to study the subject from that perspective.

Both Dr. Heather Gibson and Dr. Brijesh Thapa of UF and the Eric Friedheim Tourism Institute (EFTI) recommended Liza for the award. She heads to Rimini, Italy (near San Marino) from September 30th – October 3rd to present her findings along with several other faculty and students from UF. Liza indicated that she is most excited about seeing friends from a great group of people that she met at a previous World Leisure Congress meeting in 2010. As her first trip to Italy, she is also thrilled to have a day at the beach on the Adriatic Sea!

Not long after she returns to the USA, Liza will head to the National Recreation and Park Association Congress – Leisure Research Symposium in Anaheim, California (October 16th –
Here, her award-winning paper that she will be presenting is on sex as leisure in the shadow of depression and how it is related to the quality of people’s lives. Liza is co-authoring this article with Dr. Galit Nimrod at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, Dr. Douglas Kleiber at the University of Georgia, and Dr. Heather Gibson at UF. Liza explained, “This study explores how sex is perceived and used by people with depression, and how personal sex practices are problematized in their experiences. Sex is an important human experience associated with a sense of ‘normality’ and well-being. However, depression frequently robs sex of its qualities as a leisure activity, creating a complex paradox of sex as leisure in coping with depression, which involves not only individuals with depression but also their significant others.” For this best paper award, Liza will have her conference registration waived and will be given a $250 cash award. The NRPA advocates for environmental stewardship, healthy lifestyles, and economic vitality.

The Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management is committed to national and international excellence in the generation, dissemination, and communication of knowledge in tourism, recreation and sport management. The Department is also dedicated to excellence in the preparation and training of future industry and academic professionals, and providing relevant outreach to stakeholders.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Dr. Michael Sagas (Department Chair) at msagas@ufl.edu (352.294.1640) or Stephanie Thorn (Marketing and Public Relations) at stephaniethorn1@hhp.ufl.edu (352.392.3992).