Lía Rodriguez de la Vega · Walter N. Toscano
*Editors*

# Handbook of Leisure, Physical Activity, Sports, Recreation and Quality of Life

Springer

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# Handbook of Leisure, Physical Activity, Sports, Recreation and Quality of Life

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*I dedicate this book to my parents, Ñoyta and Carlos, who by example, compromise and love taught me what a good life was about and also to my beloved professors, Carmen and Fernando, whose work ethics and love of knowledge gave me a fabulous perspective that enriched my life. Finally, I dedicate this book to the wonderful opportunity that knowledge gives me, as a real access to a Good Life.*
Lía Rodriguez de la Vega

*I dedicate this book to my dearest wife Graciela, who is the support of my life, and to our son Pedro, who illuminates our path.*
Walter N. Toscano

*We also dedicate this book to all the people to whom this book arrives, with the hope that it will contribute to positive changes in their lives and the lives of others.*
Lía Rodriguez de la Vega and Walter N. Toscano

# Preface

The book we present seeks to continue exchanges and to consider new ideas on leisure, recreation, physical activity and sports. It brings together 23 chapters, which summon authors from countries around the world. It is divided into two parts; the first of them is dedicated to leisure and recreation and contains 14 chapters.

In the first chapter, M. Joseph Sirgy, Muzaffer Uysal and Stefan Kruger signal that leisure well-being is satisfaction in leisure life in a manner that contributes to subjective well-being. They develop a theory of leisure well-being that explains how leisure activities contribute to leisure well-being and ultimately quality of life.

In the second chapter, Takashi Inoguchi analyses leisure in relation to quality of life as surveyed in the Asia Barometer, the only quality-of-life focus survey, covering the entire Asia (East, Southeast, South and Central) with open access policy in the world. Following the conventional conception of leisure –defined as one of human activities outside work duties and family chores to re-create daily life – he analyses the satisfaction with leisure in relation to quality of life.

In the third chapter, Gwyther Rees approaches the way that children use their leisure time and how this affects their well-being. The chapter focuses on children's leisure time and activities in a sample of 16 countries across four continents, using data gathered through the international Children's Worlds survey.

In the fourth chapter, although many studies have reviewed the importance of recreational activities for increasing well-being and quality of life, Denise Benatuil focuses on the particular case of the non-formal education and recreation place within the Jewish community, usually run by Madrichim, whose role involves not only recreational activities but also a prominent social position and the transmission of values and traditions of the religion.

In the fifth chapter, Sabirah Adams and Shazly Savahl focus on merging positive psychology and environmental psychology (sustainability) by exploring children's recreational engagement with nature and the influence on their subjective well-being. The chapter details two studies conducted in the Western Cape of South Africa, in one rural and two urban communities using participatory methodologies with children.

In the sixth chapter, considering that leisure time and community space are a key aspect of children's overall well-being and directly related to their quality of life, Carmel Cefai explores the views of Maltese children on how they

make use of their free time and on the relevant spaces and facilities available for them in the community.

In the seventh chapter, Leena Haanpää and Piia af Ursin investigate the relationships between child subjective well-being and leisure time by examining how family togetherness is connected to child activity on leisure time.

In the eighth chapter, Diana R. Feldhacker, Shana Cerny, Barbara L. Brockevelt and Michael J. Lawler explore the occupations of children and youth and discuss how engagement in these occupations relates to and affects health, development and well-being.

In the ninth chapter, Graciela Tonon, Claudia Mikkelsen, Lía Rodríguez de la Vega and Walter Toscano show some results of a project for the study and the measurement of well-being and quality of life of boys and girls of 8 years old, living in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, using the International Survey of Children's Well-Being (ISCWeB) and focusing on the results obtained for the dimensions: friends, use of free time, more about you and your life, facts of life and the future.

In the tenth chapter, Lorena Ramírez, Jaime Alfaro, Pauline Heine, Patricia Easton, Gabriel Urzúa, Blanca Amo, Francisca Valdebenito, Pablo Rojas, Verónica Monreal and Andrea Jaramillo analyse the meanings of recreation and use of free time and its relationship with life satisfaction from the perspective of Chilean children and adolescents aged between 10 and 18, using the technique of content analysis and the open coding orientations of the grounded theory.

In the eleventh chapter, Antonio José López López intends, through in-depth interviews, to show the perception of the rural young people of Colombia's Andean High Mountain with respect to leisure and the different activities necessary to achieve, through this, to contribute to the enjoyment of what they consider a good life and adequate social well-being.

In the twelfth chapter, considering that the study of ageing processes has gained increased attention in recent years, partly due to the growth of this population group, and some lines of research have emphasized the concept of active ageing (Diener and Chan 2011), supporting the idea that older adults should develop their abilities through activities that make a contribution to society, María Laura Capiello and Juliana Laurito describe an intervention programme called Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults and discusses its features, the line of work adopted and the activities carried out by the participants as their social and community-based participation is encouraged and training is provided on an ongoing basis.

In the thirteenth chapter, Matías Adrián Gordziejczuk and Claudia Andrea Mikkelsen present the state of the art of the geographical study corresponding to leisure space and quality of life, seeking to investigate afterwards the possibilities of its overall application in the empirical field. They also inquire on the territorial imbalances which can be perceived as the product of cartographic overlapping spaces characterized by holding a unique predisposition towards the functionality of leisure and levels of quality of life, at the same time relating to the rates of population growth, considering Mar del Plata (Buenos Aires province, Argentina) as a study area.

In the fourteenth chapter, Vicente Rodríguez-Rodríguez, Fermina Rojo-Pérez and Gloria Fernández-Mayoralas approach active ageing placed in relation to the most important domains of quality of later life, self-assessed by the individuals. They analyse the profile of older adults in relationship to their involvement in leisure and social and community participation activities, as factors that promote an active ageing to enhance quality of later life.

In the fifteenth chapter, Óscar Figueroa gives us the possibility to extend the reflection to key historical sources, tracing the development of the ideas of happiness, well-being, etc., from non-Western countries. He explores the specific case of the ancient Indian culture and its advancing of a number of ideas on what a good life should be like and be composed of.

The second part of the book is dedicated to physical activity and sports and contains nine chapters.

In the sixteenth chapter, considering the idea that "exercise is good for you", so ingrained in Western thinking that it has the status of lore, Robert A. Cummins examines the literature from a critical methodological perspective coupled with current understanding of subjective well-being, being central to this examination is the theory of subjective well-being homeostasis.

In the seventeenth chapter, Walter Toscano presents physical activity related with health in terms of a theoretical proposition of quality of life, that require an inter-discipline multifaced approach, as well as contextualization of the analysis of quality of life from a Hippocratic perspective, including climate, geography, economic and political conditions, in the study of persons' lives. In this regard, and though 25 centuries have gone by, may be asserted that the Hippocratic theory is still as updated as it was then.

In the eighteenth chapter, Helena Águeda Marujo, Sónia P. Gonçalves, Luís Miguel Neto, Patrícia Palma and Miguel Pereira Lopes focused on two studies that were undertaken in two different samples of eight European countries. The aim of these studies was (1) to develop and validate, according to psychometric standards, an online self-administered instrument to measure the variables related to what is to "Live well" (the Live Well Index, LWI), taking into consideration four major domains: to Move Well, to Eat Well, to Feel Well and Perceived Health; and (2) to investigate the particular role of physical activity in a life well lived, and to develop and validate motivational profiles for doing and sustaining the practice of physical exercise (aspirational profiles). Implications for the study and promotion of quality of life, supported in these pillars, are addressed, in particular in what concerns the role of physical activity for quality of life and how to promote exercise in accordance with people's specific motivations.

In the nineteenth chapter, Anand Singh makes a reflexive and researched account of a living experience that focuses upon juxtaposing conditions in a society still divided by race and class. He considers the middle- class South Africans who are conscious about maintaining their quality of life against the numerous odds that characterize South Africa's contemporary sociopolitical conditions.

In the twentieth chapter, using longitudinal data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (for the period 1984–2011) for a large sample of individuals (with disabilities or not) aged 16 or over, Ricardo Pagan analyses the effects

of taking part in active sports and its intensity (i.e. never, seldom, monthly, and daily/weekly) on life satisfaction, particularly testing two different hypotheses: (a) participation in sports increases individuals' life satisfaction and (b) the effects of this participation on life satisfaction are different for people without and with disabilities, being greater for the latter group.

In the twenty-first chapter, Eva-Maria Riso and Jaak Jürimäe sustain that the knowledge of the importance of physical activity (PA) during childhood and adolescence has increased internationally, but physical inactivity of children and youth is still a growing problem all over the world. To compile the present chapter, the available data about the studies with Estonian school children were used and compared with contemporary related data obtained from studies with children from foreign countries. Their present thematic review includes the contemporary data of objectively measured PA studies of Estonian schoolchildren, which were compared to the results of peers in other countries, enabling to assess the position of Estonian children in the world according to their PA habits.

In the twenty-second chapter, Diane E. Mack, Philip M. Wilson and Katie E. Gunnell seek to provide an overview of the physical activity – well-being literature with evidence attesting to this relationship in individuals living with osteoporosis also considering recommendations for health researchers which address the specific limitations and gaps currently noted in the literature expressly designed to examine this relationship.

In the twenty-third chapter, Gonçalves Câmara, Guimarães Alves and Anziliero Arossi intend to assess whether contextual influences on practice of physical activity and sports among adolescents – as it is the case of practice of sports by important people in their lives, encouragement to playing sports from important people in their lives, the importance of and reasons for playing sports among adolescents, and their intention to play sports in the future – predict psychological well-being and life satisfaction in this population, and whether effective practice of physical activity and sports by adolescents work as a mediating variable in these relations.

In the twenty-fourth chapter, Leticia Villarreal Sosa looks for understanding how school and community activities shape the content and meaning of students' social identities and how those social identities influence their quality of life and engagement in school, specifically, to understand from students' own lived experience and how they experience quality of life. Her study is informed by a borderlands perspective and social identity theory and uses a qualitative design drawing from the Student Life in High Schools Project (SLP), a longitudinal study of the transition to high school.

We want to thank all the authors who participated in the book, with the hope that this joint production will allow us to continue advancing in the knowledge of the addresses issues, with the contributions of other realities and disciplinary perspectives also.

Buenos Aires, Argentina                                   Lía Rodriguez de la Vega
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# Acknowledgements

# Contents

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# Part I

# Leisure and Recreation

# A Benefits Theory of Leisure Well-Being

M. Joseph Sirgy, Muzaffer Uysal, and Stefan Kruger

**Abstract**

Leisure well-being is satisfaction in leisure life in a manner that contributes to subjective well-being. We develop a theory of leisure well-being that explains how leisure activities contribute to leisure well-being and ultimately quality of life. Leisure activity contributes to leisure well-being by satisfying a set of basic needs (benefits related to safety, health, economic, sensory, escape, and/or sensation/stimulation needs) and growth needs (benefits related to symbolic, aesthetic, moral, mastery, relatedness, and/or distinctiveness needs). These effects are further amplified when the benefits of leisure activities match corresponding personal characteristics, namely safety consciousness, health consciousness, price sensitivity, hedonism, escapism, sensation seeking, status consciousness, aestheticism, moral sensitivity, competitiveness, sociability, and need for distinctiveness, respectively

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## 1.1 Introduction

Past research has linked leisure activities (e.g., visiting family and friends, playing sports, watching television, listening to the radio, taking tourist trips, walking for pleasure, camping, making art, and/or using the internet) with subjective well-being (e.g., Andrews and Withey 1976; Balatsky and Diener 1993; Campbell et al. 1976; Headey et al. 1991; Jackson 2008; Koopman-Boyden and Reid 2009; McGuire 1984; Menec and Chipperfield 1997; Mitas 2010; Reynolds and Lim 2007; Yarnal et al. 2008). Despite of the plethora of research in this area, the question remains: How do leisure activities enhance subjective well-being? The research literature points to several theories, namely include flow (e.g., Cheng and Lu 2015; Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre 1989) disengagement theory (e.g., Dong et al. 2014; Lapointe and Perreault 2013; Sonnentag and Fritz 2007; Sonnentag and Zijlstra 2006), self-determination theory (e.g., Conway et al. 2015; Ryan and Deci

2000), goal theory (Kruger et al. 2015), and bottom-up spillover theory (e.g., Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell et al. 1976; Grzeskowiak et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2015; Kuykendall et al. 2015; Newman et al. 2014; Zuzanek and Zuzanek 2014).

Our focus here is to use bottom-up spillover theory of life satisfaction to build a theory of leisure well-being (see Sirgy 2012 for a discussion of the subjective well-being research dominated by this theory). Specifically, we introduce 12 sets mechanisms that impact satisfaction with leisure life and subjective well-being (i.e., leisure well-being): leisure benefits related to safety, health, economic, hedonic, escape, sensation-seeking, symbolic, aesthetics, morality, mastery, relatedness, and distinctiveness. We theorize that the a leisure activity contributes to leisure well-being if it meets certain basic needs (benefits related to safety, health, economic, sensory, escape, and/or sensation/stimulation needs) and certain growth needs (benefits related to symbolic, aesthetic, moral, mastery, relatedness, and/or distinctiveness needs). We also theorize that amplification occurs when certain benefits of leisure activities match corresponding personality traits: safety consciousness, health consciousness, price sensitivity, hedonism, escapism, sensation seeking, status consciousness, aestheticism, moral sensitivity, competitiveness, sociability, and need for distinctiveness, respectively (cf. Driver et al. 1991; Edginton et al. 2005; Liu 2014; Mayo and Jarvis 1981).

## 1.2 The Theory

Our theory of leisure well-being is heavily influenced by concepts from Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, Schwartz's (1994) value taxonomy, Inglehart's (2008) value system, Deci and Ryan's (2010) self-determination theory of motivation, and Murray (1938) individual needs. Hence, our theory reflects theoretical notions related to how a leisure activity is motivated by a set of benefits as reflected in the seminal works of Deci/Ryan, Inglehart, Maslow, Murray, and Schwartz.

We believe that every leisure activity is associated with certain goals--benefits related to basic needs (safety, health, economic, hedonic, escape, and sensation-seeking) as well as growth needs (symbolic, aesthetic, moral, mastery, relatedness, and distinctiveness benefits). The central tenet of the theory is that a leisure activity contributes significantly to leisure well-being if it delivers a range of benefits related to both basic and growth needs (see Fig. 1.1)—*the more a leisure activity delivers benefits related to basic and growth needs the greater the likelihood that such an activity would contribute significantly to satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being (i.e., leisure well-being)* (cf. Lee et al. 2014).

The psychological mechanism linking *perceived benefits* from a leisure activity and satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being can be explained using *bottom-up spillover theory* (e.g., Neal et al. 1999; Newman et al. 2014; Ragheb and Griffith 1982). The theory asserts that satisfaction with a specific leisure activity contributes to satisfaction in leisure life, which in turn contributes to subjective well-being. This is a psychological process involving a satisfaction hierarchy in which satisfaction related to a specific life event influences satisfaction with certain life domains, which in turn influences life satisfaction overall. Life satisfaction (or subjective well-being) is viewed to be a satisfaction construct on top of the satisfaction hierarchy; satisfaction in leisure life (as well satisfaction in other life domains such as social life, work life, family life, love life, community life, financial life) is considered to be less abstract. Hence, satisfaction in life domains (leisure life being a salient life domain) directly influences subjective well-being—a process characterized as bottom-up spillover. Similarly, satisfaction with a specific life event (e.g., leisure activity) is considered to be most concrete—bottom of the satisfaction hierarchy. Satisfaction with a life event influences domain satisfaction, which in turn influences subjective well-being (see a full description of this theory in Sirgy 2012).

We categorize the benefits related to a leisure activity in terms of basic versus growth needs (Maslow 1970). Leisure benefits related to basic
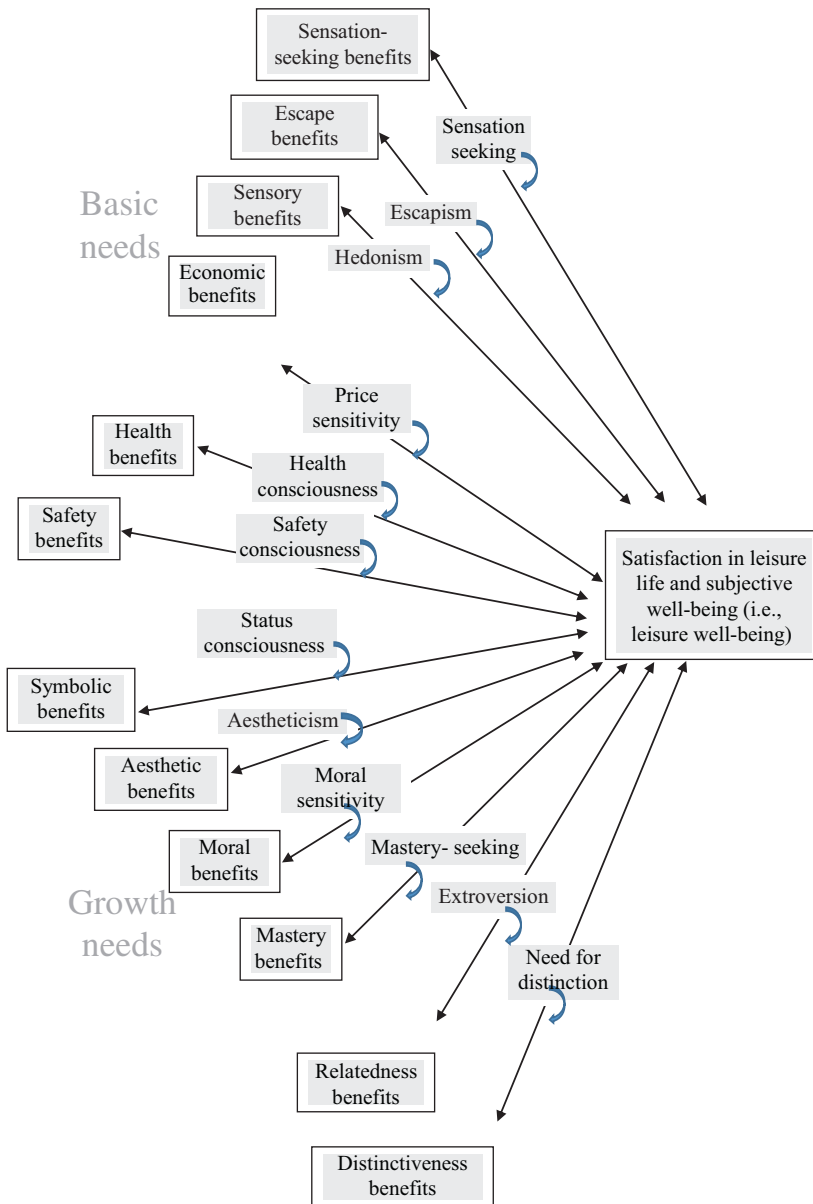
**Fig. 1.1** The theory

needs include safety, health, economic, hedonic, escape, and sensation-seeking benefits. In contrast, leisure benefits related to growth needs include symbolic, aesthetic, moral, mastery, relatedness, and distinctiveness benefits. We will discuss these benefits and how they contribute to leisure well-being (i.e., satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) in the sections below.

## 1.3 Leisure Well-Being Derived from Satisfaction of Basic Needs

One can argue that leisure well-being is mostly determined by leisure activities that have value derived from benefits related to basic needs such as safety, health, economic, sensory, escape, and sensation-seeking benefits (see Fig. 1.1).

### 1.3.1 Leisure Well-Being Derived from Safety Benefits

Leisure participants most often consider the safety features of leisure activities when they make satisfaction judgments about a leisure activity after engaging that activity (Beck and Lund 1981; Briggs and Stebbins 2014; Burton 1996; Kim et al. 2016; Mutz and Müller 2016; Pachana 2016). According to Maslow (1970), safety is a basic need. A leisure activity that meets the individual's safety needs is likely to generate feelings of security and confidence that may result in satisfaction with the activity (cf. Chitturi et al. 2008). Formally stated, leisure well-being derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception that the activity is safe. As such, increased safety benefits associated with a leisure activity (e.g., a person playing racquetball for leisure perceives a specific game to be safe because the players are required to wear protective eyewear) should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect in leisure life.

We can add another personality factor that can further interact with perceived safety of the leisure activity, namely *safety consciousness* (e.g., Best et al. 2016; Forcier et al. 2001; Habib et al. 2014; Roult et al. 2016; Visentin et al. 2016; Westaby and Lee 2003). That is, leisure participants are likely to vary along safety consciousness. Those who might be highly safety-conscious and perceive the leisure activity to be unsafe are not likely to experience significant gains in leisure well-being. In other words, we believe that there is an interaction effect between perceived safety and safety consciousness on leisure well-being.

### 1.3.2 Leisure Well-Being Derived from Health Benefits

Leisure participants also consider the health benefits of leisure activities when they make judgments about a leisure activity before and after engagement (e.g., Blank et al. 2015; Careless and Douglas 2016; Chen et al. 2016; Davidson et al.

2016; Iwasaki and Smale 1998; Sato et al. 2014). For example, having played a good game of racquetball, the racquetball player may experience leisure satisfaction if the individual perceives significant health benefits accrued from playing the game. How many calories were lost? Increases in muscle tone? Benefits to the cardiovascular system? Etc. That is, perceived health benefits should contribute to satisfaction with the leisure activity.

Past research suggests a positive relationship between leisure activities that have health benefits and subjective well-being. For example, Newman et al. (2014) found detachment-recovery (a health-related feature of leisure activities) to promote leisure well-being. Another study (Nimrod et al. 2012) found that individuals with depression perceive leisure as a coping mechanism. Yet the more depressed they are, the less time is spent on leisure activities and the less time spent on leisure activities the more depressed they become. In a cross-sectional study among Spanish university students, Molina-Garcĭa et al. (2011) found that male and female students who are more involved in higher-level physical, leisure activities experience higher levels of psychological well-being.

Additionally, some people are more health conscious than others (e.g., Careless and Douglass 2016; Chang 2016; Iwasaki and Smale 1998; Stathi et al. 2002). If so, then one can easily argue that leisure activities perceived to be produce health benefits are likely to contribute significantly to leisure well-being (i.e., satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) for health-conscious than nonhealth-conscious individuals.

### 1.3.3 Leisure Well-Being Derived from Economic Benefits

Economic needs are also involved in satisfaction judgments of leisure activities. Leisure participants may ask themselves whether the leisure activity is justified by the money spent (acquisition utility), as well as whether the money spent on the activity is a good deal compared with the

expected cost (transactional utility) (Thaler 1985; Urbany et al. 1997). Thus, individual's economic evaluation of a leisure activity is closely linked with their perceptions of the value of the activity (Sweeney and Soutar 2001). Formally stated, satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being (i.e., leisure well-being) derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's ability to deliver economic value (e.g., a person playing racquetball for leisure perceives the fact that playing the game is indeed very affordable). As such, increased economic benefits associated with a leisure activity should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect in leisure life affecting subjective well-being (cf. Brown et al. 2016; Fox 2012).

Additionally, some leisure participants are more financially frugal than others (Bove et al. 2009; Eakins 2016; Lusmägi et al. 2016). If so, then one can easily argue that leisure activities that have significant economic benefits are likely to contribute significantly to satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being (i.e., leisure well-being) for financially frugal than non-frugal individuals.

### 1.3.4   Leisure Well-Being Derived from Sensory Benefits

Sensory benefits and lack thereof are essentially related to basic needs. Leisure participants evaluate leisure activities on the basis of the extent to which the activity influences their sensory organs—their sense of sight, sound, touch, or scent (e.g., Wakefield and Barnes 1997). For example, activities such as sun bathing, wine tasting, and fine dining impact one's physical senses positively (Carruthers and Hood 2004). In contrast, playing a game of billiards in a dungeon that is damp, full of cigarette smoke, and disgusting rest rooms may be noxious to the individual. Thus, one can argue that leisure well-being (satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's ability to please one's physical senses.

As such, decreased sensory benefits associated with a leisure activity (e.g., a person playing racquetball in a racquetball court that has not been swept and cleaned) should also decrease positive affect and increase negative affect in leisure life (Briggs and Stebbins 2014; Oliveira and Doll 2016; Weng and Chang 2014).

Additionally, some people are more sensory-oriented than others (Agapito et al. 2014; Amerine et al. 2013; Ericsson and Hastie 2013; Wakefield and Barnes 1997). As such, leisure activities that lack in sensory appeal s are not likely to contribute significantly to satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being for the sensory-types than non-sensory individuals.

### 1.3.5   Leisure Well-Being Derived from Escape Benefits

Much research in personality-social psychology has demonstrated that people are motivated to avoid noxious stimuli through leisure activities (e.g., Iso-Ahola 1980; Prebensen et al. 2012; Snepenger et al. 2006). Leisure activities allow them to get away from the stresses and strains from work, family, or whatever these sources of noxious stimuli. Unger and Kernan (1983) have identified six aspects of leisure activities that contribute to satisfaction: freedom from control, freedom from work, involvement, arousal, mastery, and spontaneity. Focusing on two of their six dimensions, *freedom from control* refers to "something one perceives as voluntary, without coercion or obligation" (Unger and Kernan 1983, p. 383). *Freedom from work* refers to the ability to rest, relax, and have no obligation to perform work-related tasks (cf. Sonnentag 2012). These two types of freedom contribute to satisfaction in different ways; some individuals may play golf to escape work, whereas others do so because golfing represents time away from work supervision. Neulinger (1981) posits that perceived freedom is a state in which the person feels that what she or he is doing is done by choice and because one wants to do it (p. 15). Suggestive evidence from past research supports this concept. For example, a study by Lapa (2013) found significant

differences between leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom based on age and income, perceived freedom and gender, and a positive linear relationship between life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction among park recreation participants. As such we theorize that subjective well-being derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's ability to deliver freedom and escape benefits (e.g., a person playing racquetball for leisure perceives a specific game to be scheduled at times when he or she can escape from the job for an hour or two). Increased freedom/escape benefits associated with a leisure activity should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect in leisure life.

Furthermore, some people have a greater proclivity to seek out leisure activities with freedom/escape benefits than others (Hallman et al. 2014; Haraszti et al. 2014; Lusby and Anderson 2010). If so, then one can easily argue that leisure activities that have significant freedom/escape benefits are likely to contribute significantly to satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being for individuals with a greater proclivity for freedom and escape than those with a lesser proclivity.

### 1.3.6   Leisure Well-Being Derived from Sensation-Seeking Benefits

Much research in personality-social psychology has demonstrated that people are motivated to seek stimulation through leisure activities (e.g., Argyle 1997). Examples of such activities include children's interest in leisurely reading outside of school hours (e.g., Jensen et al. 2011), optimal experiences in river racing (e.g., Shih and Chen 2013), leisure boredom and adolescent risk behaviors (e.g., Wegner and Flisher 2009), whitewater rafting (e.g., Chen and Chen 2010), skydiving (e.g., Myrseth et al. 2012), and bungee jumping (McKay 2014).

We argue that leisure activities with sensation-seeking benefits tend to contribute to subjective well-being. Activity theory may shed some light on the why question. Much research has shown

that the greater the frequency of participation in leisure activities among the elderly the higher the subjective well-being (e.g., Adams et al. 2011; Janke and Davey 2006; Lemon et al. 1972). Activities tend to make people feel alive and well. Hence, we can assert that leisure well-being (i.e., satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's ability to deliver much stimulation and thrill (e.g., a person playing racquetball for leisure perceives a specific game to be highly stimulating because he or she is playing against a tough opponent). As such, increased stimulation/thrill benefits associated with a leisure activity should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect in leisure life.

Additionally, some people are more sensation-seeking than others (e.g., Laviolette 2012; Sotomayor and Barbieri 2016; Zuckerman 1969, 1971, 2007). Zuckerman (1969, 1971, 2007) and Zuckerman and Aluja (2014) proposed the theory of "sensation seeking" involving sensory deprivation based on optimal level of stimulation. The sensation seeking scale includes 50 items that capture ideal levels of stimulation or sensory arousal based on behavioral, social and thrill-seeking types of activities. Zuckerman (2007) found that those who pursue dangerous sports tend to be sensation seekers. People who are high on sensation seeking tend to engage in high risk behaviors of all kinds. As such, we theorize that leisure activities that have significant stimulation/thrill benefits are likely to contribute significantly to satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being for sensation-seeking than non-sensation seeking individuals.

### 1.4   Leisure Well-Being Derived from Satisfaction of Growth Needs

Leisure scholars argue that participating in leisure activities serves as a medium for personal enhancement and self-development—offers the opportunity to realize one's potential for lasting fulfilment (e.g., Filep 2012; Kelly 1990; Kleiber

1999; Kuentzel 2000; Murphy 1974; Stebbins 1992, 1996, 2005, 2012). In other words, engaging in meaningful and purposeful leisure activities yields rewards that encompass self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-exploration, and self-gratification, and as such these rewards can be viewed as growth or higher-order needs (Hall and Weiler 1992). However, different forms and types of leisure lead to different outcomes and life enriching experiences. Robert A. Stebbins (2015), in his pioneering work on "serious leisure," classified leisure activities into three forms of leisure: serious, casual, and project-based leisure. He argues that leisure participants can achieve a sense of well-being while partaking in leisure activities whether these activities are serious pursuits, casual, or project based depending on the context in which leisure activities are experienced. For example, a number of studies in leisure and tourism reveal that a growing number of people who travel engage in leisure activities in order to seek challenges, co-create experiences, and also demonstrate creativity (cf. Filep 2008; Long 1995; Stebbins 1996; Thomas and Butts 1988; Wang and Wong 2014). Feelings of achievement and mastery are quite important for leisure participants and much research support this assertion (e.g., Beard and Ragheb 1980; Vitterso 2004; White and Hendee 2000). Thus, benefits realized from leisure activities do lead to the development of competency and skill mastery, personal development, and growth, reflecting states of self-actualization and self-enrichment, which in turn contribute to subjective well-being (e.g., Gilbert and Abdullah 2004; Dolnicar et al. 2012). The assertion that leisure activities can provide benefits that satisfy growth needs is consistent with several theories of human motivation, namely Maslow's (1970) needs theory and Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory. The extant literature supports the general theme of this paper in that every leisure activity provides functional benefits, and benefits related to basic as well as growth needs of participants as seen in Fig. 1.1. We now turn our attention to describing leisure benefits related to growth needs—symbolic, aesthetic, moral, mastery, relatedness, and distinctiveness benefits.

### 1.4.1  Leisure Well-Being Derived from Symbolic Benefits

The benefits that reflect self (or symbolic) needs relate directly to social approval, such that individuals evaluate leisure activities according to the extent to which those activities symbolize their social self (Maslow 1970). For example, people might wonder, "Does this leisure activity bestow status and prestige on me?" or "Are others impressed when they see me engaged in this activity?" The underlying need here is social approval (Sirgy 1986). The needs for self-esteem and self-consistency equally apply too (Sirgy 1982, 1986). People may question, "Does my engagement in this leisure activity help me become the kind of person I like to become?" (need for self-esteem) or "Is participation in this activity consistent with the kind of person I am?" (need for self-consistency).

Much research in consumer behavior has shown that consumers purchase goods to express their identity (e.g., Attanasio et al. 2015; Malhotra 1988; Sirgy 1982), and self-congruity plays an important role in pre-purchase behaviors (e.g., brand attitude, brand preferences, purchase motivation, brand choice), as well as post-consumption responses (e.g., consumer satisfaction, brand loyalty, repeat purchase). The same research applies to leisure activities and leisure well-being (Sirgy and Su 2000). How? Based on self-congruity theory (Sirgy 1986), each leisure activity is associated with a personality. For example, a person who enjoys fishing may have a calm demeanor, a person who enjoys racquetball is competitive, a person who plays chess is intellectual, etc. Thus, people feel satisfied with a leisure activity when they perceive the personality associated with a leisure activity matching their own actual self-image. Such satisfaction is motivated by the need for self-consistency. That is, people feel good about activities they participate because the activities serve to reinforce their personal identity. For example, if a person is an intellectual and has an image of a typical chess player as being intellectual, then playing a chess game serves to reinforce his image of being intellectual. This is self-valida-

tion making the person feel happy about the fact that he is playing chess. The same can be said in relation to the ideal self and social self (Snyder and DeBono 1985). People like to project positive images of themselves in the eyes of others (particularly significant others), and they may do this by engaging in leisure activities that are associated with those images. Doing so is motivated by the needs for self-esteem and social approval. For example, the image of a person who is a marathon runner is that of an athlete who can persevere through much pain and has much self-control. A person decides to participate in a marathon. He or she wants to become a person who exercises a high degree of self-control (ideal self-image); he or she wants to convince others that is a person who exercises a high degree of self-control (social self). Engaging in a marathon run is likely to be satisfying because the activity would meet the need for self-esteem (allow him or her to realize an ideal self-image) and the need for social approval (allow others to think of him or her as a person who has a high degree of self-control).

Formally stated, leisure well-being (i.e., satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) derived from a leisure activity (e.g., a person playing racquetball for leisure perceives a specific game to be played with other players he or she can identify with—players like him of her) is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's symbolic value to reinforce and validate actual, ideal, and social self-image. As such, increased symbolic benefits associated with a leisure activity should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson 2015; Ekinci et al. 2013; Funk and James 2015; Shim et al. 2013; Sirgy 1982, 1986; Sirgy and Su 2000).

Additionally, some people are more self-expressive than others (e.g., Lee et al. 2015; Bosnjak et al. 2016; Waterman et al. 2008). As such, we theorize that leisure activities that have significant symbolic benefits are likely to contribute significantly to satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being for self-expressive than non-self-expressive individuals.

### 1.4.2 Leisure Well-Being Derived from Benefits Related to Beauty and Aesthetics

Maslow (1970) also describes the need for beauty or aesthetics. This need may be involved in satisfaction judgments of leisure activities. In other words, leisure participants evaluate leisure activities on the basis of the extent to which the activity satisfies their sense of beauty and aesthetics. Consider leisure activities such visiting an art gallery, attending a musical concerto, taking a sculpture or pottery workshop, painting of fine arts, etc. (Hasmi et al. 2014; Lehto et al. 2014; Stranger 1999).

Thus, we theorize that subjective well-being derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's aesthetic and beauty value. As such, increased aesthetic/beauty benefits associated with a leisure activity or its environment (e.g., a person playing racquetball for leisure perceives a specific game to be played in an aesthetically pleasing court) should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect in leisure life.

Additionally, some people are more aesthetics-oriented than others (e.g., Abuhamdeh and Csikszentmihalyi 2004). If so, then one can argue that leisure activities that have significant aesthetics/beauty benefits are likely to contribute significantly to satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being for those who are more aesthetics-oriented than those who are less so.

### 1.4.3 Leisure Well-Being Derived from Moral Benefits

We also introduce the concept of moral benefits based on Maslow's (1970) need for self-actualization and self-transcendence, as developed further by Schwartz (1994), and Inglehart (2008). Maslow (1970) describes a self-actualized person as integrated socially, emotionally, cognitively, and *morally*, such that he or she engages in moral reasoning and evaluates courses of action on the basis of moral criteria. Leisure participants may evaluate leisure activities

according to whether participation in those activities contributes to the welfare of others (e.g., relay events to raise funds for a group or community in need) (Godbey et al. 2005).

Thus, we argue that leisure well-being (i.e., satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's moral benefits (e.g., a racquetball player who usually plays the game for leisure purposes signs up in a racquetball tournament sponsored by a charity organization such as the UNICEF—ticket proceeds used directly to support children and youth programs in developing countries). As such, increased moral benefits associated with a leisure activity should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect in leisure life (e.g., Anić 2014; Long et al. 2014; Sylvester 2015).

Additionally, some leisure participants are more morally sensitive than others (e.g., Myyry and Helkama 2002). If so, then one can argue that leisure activities that have significant moral benefits are likely to contribute significantly to leisure well-being for the morally-sensitive than the morally non-sensitive individuals.

### 1.4.4   Leisure Well-Being Derived from Mastery Benefits

Unger and Kernan (1983) have identified mastery as an important driver of leisure activities. Leisure activities that allow people to experience feelings of mastery induce much positive affect. An individual might feel a sense of mastery after completing the ultimate level of a challenging video game. Suggestive evidence from research in subjective well-being supports this relationship (Newman et al. 2014; Sonnentag and Fritz 2007). For example, Chang and Yu (2013) was able to demonstrate that leisure competence is negatively related to health-related stressors for older adults living in Taiwan.

Mastery benefits in leisure activities contribute to subjective well-being. Perhaps this occurs through effectance motivation (Hills and Argyle 2001; Hills et al. 2000). Respondents were asked

to rate their ability in relation to 36 activities: "How good do you think you are at this activity?" The study results indicated that reported enjoyment activities correlated highly with reported ability for all activities, even for activities that do not seem to involve effectance (e.g., watching television, reading a book, and going for a walk). Mastering leisure activities make people feel useful and productive. Through mastering leisure activities people experience rewards of all kinds: social rewards (e.g., Twenge et al. 2010), a sense of recognition, and in some cases monetary rewards (e.g., Tapps et al. 2013).

We believe that leisure well-being (i.e., satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's mastery benefits (e.g., a person playing racquetball for leisure perceives a specific game to be helpful in enhancing his or her skill level in racquetball-related sports). As such, increased mastery benefits associated with a leisure activity should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect in leisure life.

There may be individual differences here too. That is, some people are more mastery-seeking than others (e.g., Dweck and Leggett 1988; Forbes 2015). If so, leisure activities that have significant mastery benefits are likely to contribute significantly to subjective well-being for mastery-seeking than non-mastery-seeking individuals.

### 1.4.5   Leisure Well-Being Derived from Relatedness Benefits

Many leisure activities (e.g., watching a movie drama, playing tennis, engaging in team sports, getting together with others in church or social clubs) are social in nature. That is, they involve people socializing while engaging in leisure--social interactions that result in satisfaction of a variety of social needs. Examples of social needs include the need for social approval, affiliation, belongingness, social status, social recognition, cooperation, competition, and altruism (e.g., Brajsa-Zganec et al. 2011; Leung and Lee 2005).

Suggestive evidence from research in subjective well-being supports this relationship (Deci and Ryan 2010; Newman et al. 2014). For example, Chang and Yu (2013) demonstrated that leisure social support is negatively related to health-related stressors for older adults living in Taiwan.

Relatedness benefits in leisure activities contribute to subjective well-being by satisfying social needs, an important ingredient in subjective well-being. Consider the following study conducted by Hills et al. (2000). The study demonstrated the link between leisure activities and satisfaction of social needs. Specifically, satisfaction of social needs was significantly correlated with the following activities:

- Engaging in active sports, taking on dangerous sports, fishing, and attending musical performance (r = .27);
- Dancing, eating out, engaging in family activities, attending social parties, getting together with other people at pubs, travelling to tourist places on holidays, socializing with friends, going to the movies, and watching sport events (r = .45);
- Engaging in do-it-yourself activities, taking evening classes, doing meditation, engaging in serious reading, and sewing (r = .46);
- Attending political activities, raising money for charity, engaging in religious activities, and doing voluntary work (r = .55).

Thus, we believe that leisure well-being (i.e., satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's relatedness benefits (e.g., a person playing racquetball for leisure perceives a specific game to be played in the context of a social club allowing him or her to socialize with others before and after the game). As such, increased relatedness benefits associated with a leisure activity should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect. Additionally, some people are more extroverted than others (e.g., Caldwell and Andereck 1994; Walker et al. 2005).

We also believe that this relation is moderated by extroversion-introversion. That is, leisure

activities that have significant relatedness benefits are likely to contribute significantly to subjective well-being for extroverts more so than for introverts.

### 1.4.6 Leisure Well-Being Derived from Distinctiveness Benefits

There is a tendency in people to desire uniqueness. Striving for uniqueness is wired in us. As such, this motive is manifested in participating in leisure activities and hedonic consumption (Frochota and Morrison 2001; Tinsley and Tinsley 1986). Engaging in leisure activities considered less common or less popular is usually a way to demonstrate uniqueness—observers are likely to perceive the actor as highly distinct—standing out from the crowd.

We believe that leisure well-being (i.e., satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being) derived from a leisure activity is a positive function of the individual's perception of the activity's distinctiveness benefits (e.g., a college student may perceive squash as a game played by a select few, thus chooses to play squash because doing so is likely to make him or her highly distinct from other college students). As such, increased distinctiveness benefits associated with a leisure activity should also increase positive affect and decrease negative affect in leisure life.

Additionally, some people seek distinctiveness more than others (e.g., Abbott-Chapman and Robertson 2015). In other words, we believe that the uniqueness benefit effect on subjective well-being is moderated by a personality trait related to seeking distinctiveness. Leisure activities that have significant distinctiveness benefits are likely to contribute significantly to satisfaction in leisure life and subjective well-being for those seek distinctiveness than those who do not.

### 1.5  Conclusion

In this chapter we discuss a theory of leisure well-being guided by the concept of bottom-up spill-over (e.g., Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell

et al. 1976; Newman et al. (2014). The goal is to introduce to the reader a more-refined bottom-up spillover model by linking 12 sets of perceived leisure benefits to subjective well-being—leisure benefits related to safety, health, economic, sensory, escape, sensation-seeking, symbolic, aesthetics, morality, mastery, relatedness, and distinctiveness. We argued that the perceived benefits can be categorized in terms of basic versus growth needs. Benefits associated with basic needs include benefits related to safety, health, economic, sensory, escape, or sensation/stimulation needs. In contrast, benefits related to growth needs include benefits related to symbolic, aesthetic, moral, mastery, relatedness, or distinctiveness needs. We argue that the satisfaction that is extracted as a result of the leisure activity's interaction between benefits related to basic and growth needs is further amplified when the same benefits match the individual's personality. This satisfaction amplification associated with the leisure activity contributes significantly to positive affect in leisure life, which in turn contributes significantly to subjective well-being.

Although we provided suggestive evidence to our theoretical propositions, we believe that the theory can set the stage for programmatic research in this area. We encourage leisure researchers to conduct rigorous research to systematically test the theoretical propositions through cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal research. Such testing should lead to the transformation of the overall model into an established theory of leisure well-being.

Our theory of leisure well-being has several managerial implications. The theory prompts leisure professionals to do the following:

- Any leisure activity should be planned to provide benefits related to *basic needs*: benefits related to safety (safety measures are taken such wearing of protective eyewear), health (the game enhances cardio-vascular health and helps with weight control), economics (the service fee is affordable), sensory (after the game the patrons enjoy a soothing massage followed by a hot shower and a delicious snack), escape (the game is scheduled midday to allow the patrons to temporarily escape the stress of their job), and/or sensation/stimulation (the game allows the patrons to experience a high level of sensation/stimulation perhaps by matching players with competitors of equal skill level).

- Additionally, the leisure activity should also be planned to provide benefits related to *growth needs*: benefits related to the self (the patrons can identify with one another, perhaps in terms of age, gender, and occupational status—mature men who are professors playing racquetball at the same college), aesthetics (the racquetball courts are aesthetically pleasing), morality (the game is sponsored by a charity organization), mastery (a racquetball mentor oversees the game to provide tips and guidance to foster performance excellence), relatedness (the game is offered through a social club to allow players to socialize before and after the game), and/or distinctiveness (each play is encouraged to develop his or her own winning strategies and to share this knowledge with selected others).

- In addition to ensuring benefits related to the patron's basic and growth needs, the leisure activity should also be planned to ensure that the satisfaction effect from the inherent benefits related to basic and growth needs are further amplified by matching the leisure activity to patrons with corresponding *personality traits* (i.e., personality traits that reflect the selected basic and growth needs). For example, a benefit such as relatedness can be injected in the planning of the leisure activity if management knows that most of the patrons are extroverts. Hence, the extrovert racquetball players are likely to experience a higher level of satisfaction playing the game in the context of a social club to allow them to socialize before and after the game.

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# Leisure Satisfaction in Relation to Quality of Life Using the AsiaBarometer Survey Data

**2**

Takashi Inoguchi

**Abstract**

The chapter analyses leisure in relation to quality of life as surveyed in the AsiaBarometer, the only quality-of-life focus survey, covering the entire Asia (East, Southeast, South and Central) with open access policy in the world. Conventionally, leisure is defined as one of human activities outside work duties and family chores to re-create daily life. I follow to this conventional conception and analyses the satisfaction with leisure in relation to quality of life.

that Aristotle sees leisure as one of the highest genres of human activities. In the ancient Chinese philosopher, Mencius, also states that if one has no constant property, one has no constant mind.

Leisure is conventionally defined as a human activity bereft of work duties to re-create good conditions for life. Here the philosophical content may have disappeared. Nevertheless, the core point of being free of work duties remains. Therefore, using survey data available by the AsiaBarometer is not a problem. In what follows, I attempt to see the relationship between quality of life and leisure.

## 2.1 Introduction

The ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, defines leisure as privilege of elites, who has sufficient property and education. Leisure is regarded as time to think freely. Without free thinking creative ideas cannot be produced. Thus it is clear

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## 2.2 Satisfaction with Leisure by Country

Positive responses, very satisfied and somewhat satisfied, combined gives the list by country as shown in Fig. 2.1:

Highly listed include Brunei, the Maldives, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore. All of them are broadly maritime countries located in South and Southeast Asia. Next come, (skipping Australia and the United States), South Asian countries like Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Afghanistan. Then come some Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Myanmar. Central Asian countries are listed next to Southeast Asia more or less. They include:

| Country | Very Satisfied | Somewhat Satisfied | Neither | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brunei | 57% | 38% | 3% | 2% | 1% |
| Maldives | 60% | 29% | 8% | 2% | 1% |
| Malaysia | 24% | 64% | 10% | 2% | 0% |
| Indonesia | 38% | 47% | 11% | 4% | 0% |
| Singapore | 23% | 61% | 12% | 3% | 0% |
| Australia | 39% | 45% | 10% | 6% | 1% |
| Bhutan | 39% | 44% | 11% | 4% | 1% |
| United States | 37% | 44% | 10% | 7% | 2% |
| India | 37% | 43% | 15% | 3% | 2% |
| Philippines | 26% | 54% | 14% | 5% | 1% |
| Sri Lanka | 31% | 49% | 13% | 5% | 3% |
| Thailand | 28% | 51% | 12% | 9% | 1% |
| Laos | 20% | 56% | 14% | 9% | 1% |
| Bangladesh | 28% | 46% | 18% | 6% | 3% |
| Myanmar | 25% | 46% | 19% | 7% | 3% |
| Nepal | 3% | 66% | 17% | 10% | 4% |
| Afghanistan | 23% | 44% | 25% | 6% | 2% |
| Kazakhstan | 20% | 44% | 18% | 12% | 7% |
| Kyrgyzstan | 22% | 41% | 17% | 12% | 9% |
| Turkmenistan | 37% | 24% | 18% | 12% | 9% |
| Pakistan | 13% | 47% | 24% | 13% | 2% |
| Japan | 12% | 45% | 26% | 13% | 3% |
| Russia | 14% | 38% | 30% | 13% | 4% |
| Taiwan | 6% | 46% | 41% | 7% | 0% |
| Uzbekistan | 14% | 37% | 17% | 18% | 14% |
| Mongolia | 15% | 34% | 31% | 14% | 6% |
| Hong Kong | 7% | 42% | 45% | 6% | 1% |
| Cambodia | 20% | 29% | 41% | 8% | 3% |
| Vietnam | 16% | 25% | 54% | 5% | 1% |
| China | 8% | 29% | 45% | 14% | 4% |
| Tajikistan | 7% | 27% | 29% | 22% | 15% |
| South Korea | 5% | 28% | 43% | 18% | 6% |

Legend: Very Satisfied ■ Somewhat Satisfied ■ Neither ■ Somewhat Dissatisfied ■ Very Dissatisfied

**Fig. 2.1** Leisure satisfaction by country
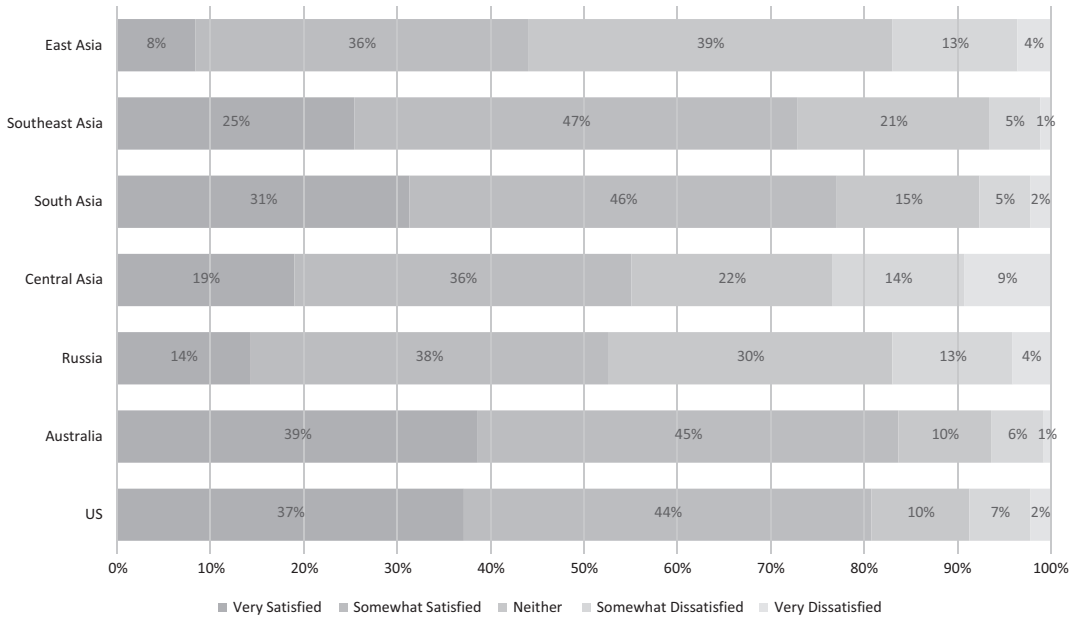
**Fig. 2.2** Leisure satisfaction by sub region

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan. Lastly come East Asian countries like Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, China, and South Korea.

Positive responses combined by sub-regions (East, Southeast, South and Central, adjacent to Asia) as shown in Fig. 2.2:

Of the four sub-regions of Asia, South Asia stands out in terms of satisfaction with leisure. This may come as a small surprise since South Asia registers the lowest per capita income out of the four sub-regions. Next comes Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is close to South Asia in terms of leisure satisfaction. Central Asia's satisfaction with leisure is not so high but higher than East Asia's satisfaction with leisure. East Asia is ranked as the lowest of the four sub-regions of Asia. The order of the four Asian subregions is the same with the order of happiness in Asia (Inoguchi and Fujii 2013; Inoguchi 2015; Inoguchi and Estes 2016).

Three countries adjacent to Asia surveyed in the AsiaBarometer are Russia, Australia and the United States. Australia stands out in terms of satisfaction with leisure. Next close to Australia is the United States. Russia registers the lower level, of satisfaction with leisure than East Asia.

## 2.3 Which Lifestyle Priorities Contribute to the Satisfaction with Leisure?

Question: Which lifestyle priorities are important to you? Pick five from among the following 25 lifestyles.

Lifestyles:

1. Food (having enough to eat)
2. Comfortable housing
3. Health
4. Sufficient medical care
5. No fear about crime
6. Have a job
7. Higher education
8. Possessing good things
9. High income

10. Time with the family
11. Good human relations
12. Success in job
13. Becoming famous
14. Enjoying hobby
15. Arts and culture
16. Cosmetics (dressing up)
17. Competition with others (winning)
18. Individual (express one's personality/using one's talents)
19. Helping community
20. Piety (being devout)
21. Nurturing children
22. Freedom of assembly
23. Comfort with good government
24. Livable area
25. Safe and beautiful environment

(21–25 are only on surveys conducted in 2006, 2007 and 2008)

I use the combined positive responses, very satisfied and satisfied, to rank 29

Asian and three adjacent societies. Figure 2.1 (Q36)

1. Brunei
2. The Maldives
3. Malaysia
4. Indonesia
5. Singapore
6. Australia
7. Bhutan
8. The United States
9. India
10. The Philippines
11. Sri Lanka
12. Thailand
13. Laos
14. Bangladesh
15. Myanmar
16. Nepal
17. Afghanistan
18. Kazakhstan
19. Kyrgyzstan
20. Turkmenistan
21. Pakistan
22. Japan

23. Russia
24. Taiwan
25. Uzbekistan
26. Mongolia
27. Hong Kong
28. Cambodia
29. Vietnam
30. China
31. Tajikistan
32. South Korea

Looked at sub-regionally, Fig. 2.2 (Q36), respondents in South Asia are most satisfied with leisure. Close to South Asia is Southeast Asia. Substantially way down is Central Asia. Further way down is East Asia.

Of the three adjacent societies, Australia is ranked highest and the United States next. Both are more satisfied with leisure than any of Asia's sub-regional averages. Russia is less satisfied with leisure than Central Asian average while vis-a-vis East Asia Russia is more satisfied with leisure than East Asian average.

## 2.4 Which Life Priorities Satisfaction Contribute Positively or Negatively to Leisure Satisfaction?

Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 are the summary of regression analysis of how much life priorities contribute to satisfaction with leisure.

### 2.4.1 East Asia

China: Those Chinese respondents who are not satisfied with food, with good human relations and with hobby tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.

Hong Kong: No factor contributing to leisure satisfaction with statistical significance.

Japan: Those Japanese respondents who are not satisfied with health, with fear about crime, with a job, with a high income, and with gorgeous dress tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.

**Table 2.1** Regression coefficient (East Asia)

| | Food | Housing | Health | Suffici Medical | No Crime | Job | High Edcton | Good Thing | High Income | Family Time | Human Relat | Job Success | Famous | Hobby | Culture | Cosmetic | Compete | Individl | Comunity | Piety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| China | -0.04 | **0.18** | 0.22 | 0.02 | **0.21** | 0.02 | **0.28** | 0.09 | -0.04 | 0.06 | **0.29** | **0.20** | -0.14 | **0.61** | 0.21 | **0.51** | 0.22 | 0.18 | 0.10 | 0.33 |
| Hong Kong | 0.04 | -0.02 | -0.09 | -0.01 | -0.13 | 0.02 | -0.49 | -0.20 | 0.00 | 0.19 | 0.12 | 0.09 | 0.10 | 0.35 | 0.39 | 0.39 | 0.29 | -0.05 | 0.32 | 0.48 |
| Japan | *0.23* | -0.03 | *0.17* | 0.06 | *-0.33* | *-0.39* | 0.08 | 0.40 | *-1.05* | 0.13 | 0.01 | -0.08 | 0.48 | **0.29** | 0.19 | 0.02 | -0.52 | -0.05 | 0.08 | -0.06 |
| South Korea | 0.14 | 0.07 | 0.22 | -0.09 | -0.06 | -0.07 | -0.19 | 0.16 | *-0.37* | 0.11 | *0.21* | -0.02 | -0.05 | **0.31** | 0.36 | 0.09 | 0.35 | 0.21 | -0.36 | 0.18 |
| Taiwan | -0.16 | 0.15 | 0.03 | -0.03 | -0.07 | -0.10 | 0.50 | 0.49 | -0.28 | 0.29 | **0.47** | 0.16 | -0.23 | **0.59** | 0.31 | 0.30 | -0.20 | **0.69** | -0.56 | 0.71 |

Note: Dependent variable: leisure satisfaction (higher score indicates more satisfaction)

Italic indicates 5% significant, Italic-bold indicates 1% significant

*Suffci* Sufficient, *Edcton* Education, *Relat* Relationship, *Individl* Individual

**Table 2.2**  Regression coefficient (Southeast Asia)

| | Food | Housing | Health | Suffici Medical | No Crime | Job | High Edcton | Good Thing | High Income | Family Time | Human Relat | Job Success | Famous | Hobby | Culture | Cosmetic | Compete | Individl | Comunity | Piety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brunei | 0.23 | −0.06 | −0.04 | *−0.81* | −0.06 | 0.09 | 0.05 | 0.85 | −0.45 | 0.09 | −0.23 | −0.10 | −0.54 | −0.58 | *−1.29* | −1.40 | −0.17 | −0.56 | −0.79 | |
| Cambodia | 0.17 | 0.17 | 0.10 | −0.09 | 0.11 | 0.24 | 0.23 | 0.45 | −0.08 | 0.15 | **0.36** | 0.10 | 0.33 | **0.65** | 0.18 | −0.15 | 0.11 | 0.14 | 0.15 | 0.07 |
| Indonesia | 0.09 | 0.27 | **0.52** | *0.33* | **0.43** | **0.40** | **0.58** | 0.26 | 0.17 | **0.43** | **0.50** | 0.00 | 0.50 | −0.12 | 0.04 | −0.15 | 0.22 | 0.12 | **0.85** | *0.26* |
| Laos | −0.15 | *−0.32* | 0.14 | −0.19 | −0.03 | −0.07 | −0.13 | 0.16 | −0.21 | 0.11 | 0.13 | 0.05 | −0.08 | 0.02 | 0.45 | −0.22 | −0.02 | −0.53 | 0.18 | 0.10 |
| Malaysia | **0.31** | 0.08 | **0.50** | 0.17 | **0.28** | 0.27 | 0.31 | 0.02 | 0.09 | **0.44** | 0.20 | **0.47** | 0.73 | **0.81** | −0.38 | −0.52 | 0.25 | 0.38 | 0.06 | **0.38** |
| Myanmar | 0.23 | **0.34** | **0.60** | *0.32* | **0.45** | **0.41** | **0.53** | **0.38** | 0.07 | **0.45** | **0.55** | 0.34 | **0.83** | **0.65** | **0.56** | **0.45** | 0.24 | **0.42** | 0.28 | **0.61** |
| Philippines | 0.01 | *0.24* | 0.09 | −0.17 | −0.02 | 0.08 | −0.13 | 0.03 | −0.16 | 0.00 | 0.13 | 0.24 | 0.17 | **0.55** | 0.03 | −0.10 | −0.26 | 0.10 | 0.20 | 0.00 |
| Singapore | −0.22 | 0.09 | −0.01 | −0.26 | 0.04 | −0.03 | −0.13 | −0.11 | −0.18 | 0.28 | −0.03 | 0.16 | −0.20 | 0.13 | −0.42 | 0.26 | −0.49 | −0.71 | 0.11 | 0.44 |
| Thailand | **−0.45** | 0.02 | −0.24 | **−0.32** | **−0.50** | **−0.50** | *−0.36* | −0.29 | **−0.53** | −0.17 | −0.18 | **−0.51** | 0.22 | −0.27 | −0.25 | −0.55 | −0.50 | **−0.63** | −0.29 | **−0.58** |
| Vietnam | 0.03 | −0.01 | 0.06 | −0.02 | −0.09 | 0.05 | 0.16 | −0.06 | −0.03 | 0.05 | 0.19 | *0.19* | 0.42 | 0.36 | 0.34 | 0.37 | 0.20 | −0.17 | 0.01 | −0.01 |

Note: Dependent variable: leisure satisfaction (higher score indicates more satisfaction)

Italic indicates 5% significant, Italic-bold indicates 1% significant

*Suffici* Sufficient, *Edcton* Education, *Relat* Relationship, *Individll* Individual

**Table 2.3** Regression coefficient (South Asia)

| | Food | Housing | Health | Suffici Medical | No Crime | Job | High Edcton | Good Thing | High Income | Family Time | Human Relat | Job Success | Famous | Hobby | Culture | Cosmetic | Compete | Individl | Comunity | Piety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bangladesh | -0.87 | -0.03 | -0.16 | -0.38 | -0.18 | -0.27 | -0.20 | -0.54 | -0.46 | -0.04 | -0.09 | 0.00 | -0.24 | 0.06 | -0.32 | -0.65 | -1.34 | -0.24 | -0.07 | -0.46 |
| Bhutan | 0.15 | 0.16 | 0.36 | 0.38 | -0.06 | 0.19 | -0.32 | *1.00* | 0.59 | 0.18 | 0.22 | 0.42 | 0.22 | 0.37 | 0.32 | -0.16 | 0.74 | 0.51 | 0.05 | 0.45 |
| India | *0.24* | *0.33* | **0.53** | *0.33* | 0.13 | -0.10 | -0.09 | 0.15 | *0.26* | *0.48* | *0.29* | *0.29* | *0.39* | *0.47* | 0.37 | **0.85** | -0.09 | -0.24 | 0.25 | *0.24* |
| Maldives | 0.33 | -0.01 | 0.25 | -0.03 | 0.24 | 0.05 | 0.16 | ***-1.19*** | -0.12 | 0.17 | 0.52 | -0.01 | 0.82 | -0.11 | -0.21 | 0.12 | 0.73 | 0.60 | -0.68 | 0.04 |
| Nepal | 0.20 | -0.62 | -0.56 | -0.30 | -0.15 | -0.38 | -0.27 | -0.93 | -0.35 | 0.12 | -0.30 | -0.23 | -0.54 | -0.29 | 0.08 | 0.62 | -0.68 | -0.13 | -0.72 | 0.40 |
| Pakistan | 0.15 | 0.04 | 0.36 | 0.17 | 0.09 | -0.08 | 0.11 | 0.03 | -0.02 | **0.67** | 0.25 | *0.49* | 0.05 | 0.43 | *0.78* | 0.03 | 0.19 | *0.62* | 0.27 | 0.20 |
| Sri Lanka | 0.33 | 0.33 | *0.54* | **0.59** | 0.11 | -0.09 | 0.39 | 0.17 | -0.19 | *0.51* | 0.04 | -0.01 | 0.35 | -0.14 | -0.14 | 0.36 | 0.14 | 0.09 | 0.25 | *0.56* |

Note: Dependent variable: leisure satisfaction (higher score indicates more satisfaction)

Italic indicates 5% significant, Italic-bold indicates 1% significant

*Suffici* Sufficient, *Edcton* Education, *Relat* Relationship, *Individl* Individual

**Table 2.4** Regression coefficient (Central Asia)

| | Food | Housing | Health | Suffici Medical | No Crime | Job | High Edcton | Good Thing | High Income | Family Time | Human Relat | Job Success | Famous | Hobby | Culture | Cosmetic | Compete | Individl | Comunity | Piety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | 0.46 | −0.13 | 0.09 | 0.14 | 0.30 | −0.08 | −0.04 | −0.04 | 0.05 | *0.67* | 0.15 | −0.10 | 0.04 | 0.25 | 0.03 | −0.06 | 0.27 | −0.69 | 0.24 | 0.00 |
| Kazakhstan | −0.24 | −0.11 | 0.29 | −0.17 | 0.22 | −0.36 | 0.15 | 0.74 | −0.26 | 0.13 | 0.04 | 0.39 | ***1.94*** | −0.43 | 0.62 | 0.21 | 0.41 | −0.69 | −0.23 | −0.08 |
| Kyrgyzstan | *−0.32* | −0.28 | 0.29 | 0.02 | 0.20 | 0.13 | 0.02 | 0.25 | ***−0.47*** | 0.24 | 0.23 | 0.25 | 0.04 | −0.33 | 0.26 | 0.21 | 0.32 | 0.18 | 0.08 | 0.20 |
| Mongolia | 0.03 | −0.08 | 0.23 | 0.10 | 0.44 | 0.20 | 0.30 | 0.19 | −0.36 | 0.26 | 0.28 | 0.18 | 0.01 | −0.30 | 0.13 | 1.45 | 0.11 | 0.21 | *0.64* | 0.29 |
| Tajikistan | −0.24 | −0.21 | 0.19 | 0.29 | *0.50* | 0.25 | 0.08 | 0.18 | 0.24 | ***0.61*** | 0.02 | 0.34 | 0.49 | 0.42 | *0.90* | *0.44* | 0.42 | −0.01 | 0.00 | −0.39 |
| Turkmenistan | −0.32 | ***−0.91*** | 0.15 | 0.33 | −0.06 | 0.13 | *1.34* | 0.80 | *−0.55* | −0.18 | −0.04 | *1.39* | −0.39 | 0.19 | −0.32 | 0.52 | −0.18 | 0.48 | −0.11 | 0.00 |
| Uzbekistan | 1.60 | 1.31 | 1.42 | 1.24 | 1.39 | 1.37 | 1.30 | 1.56 | 1.15 | 1.48 | 1.55 | 1.62 | 2.34 | 1.75 | 1.65 | 1.44 | 1.67 | 1.14 | 1.42 | 1.58 |

Note: Dependent variable: leisure satisfaction (higher score indicates more satisfaction)

Italic indicates 5% significant, Italic-bold indicates 1% significant

*Suffici* Sufficient, *Edcton* Education, *Relat* Relationship, *Individl* Individual

**Table 2.5** Regression coefficient (Outside Asia)

| | Food | Housing | Health | Suffici Medical | No Crime | Job | High Edcton | Good Thing | High Income | Family Time | Human Relat | Job Success | Famous | Hobby | Culture | Cosmetic | Compete | Individl | Comunity | Piety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Russia | −0.07 | −0.10 | 0.12 | −0.21 | −0.26 | 0.12 | 0.04 | 0.13 | 0.06 | *0.42* | −0.02 | *0.79* | −0.25 | 0.11 | 0.51 | 0.51 | 0.48 | −0.09 | −0.49 | −0.45 |
| Australia | 0.01 | −0.07 | 0.17 | 0.01 | −0.20 | 0.01 | −0.02 | 0.20 | −0.34 | *0.36* | −0.38 | −0.10 | −1.14 | *0.39* | *−0.91* | −0.65 | −0.36 | 0.30 | −0.11 | −0.28 |
| United States | −0.02 | −0.14 | *0.40* | −0.25 | −0.11 | −0.24 | 0.26 | −0.02 | −0.15 | 0.07 | 0.26 | 0.02 | 0.10 | *0.52* | 0.26 | −0.92 | 0.14 | −0.22 | 0.19 | 0.26 |

Note: Dependent variable: leisure satisfaction (higher score indicates more satisfaction)

Italic indicates 5% significant, Italic–bold indicates 1% significant

*Suffici* Sufficient, *Edcton* Education, *Relat* Relationship, *Individl* Individual

South Korea: Those South Korean respondents who are not satisfied with high income and with hobby tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.

Taiwan: Positively contributing to leisure satisfaction are individualism, hobby, good human relations while mildly positively contributing to leisure satisfaction is time together with family.

## 2.4.2 Southeast Asia

Brunei: Contributing positively to leisure satisfaction is possessing good things. Negatively affecting leisure satisfaction are sufficient medicine and religiosity.

Cambodia: Positively affecting to leisure satisfaction are good human relations and good hobby.

Indonesia: Those Indonesian respondents who are not satisfied with the following life domains tend to be dissatisfied with leisure: comfortable housing, health, sufficient medicine, a job, higher education, time together with family, good human relations, availability to local community. Secondarily, those Indonesian respondents who are moderately dissatisfied with the following life domains tend to be dissatisfied with leisure: no fear of crime, high income, religiosity, reading children.

Laos: Negatively contributing to leisure satisfaction is comfortable house.

Malaysia: Positively contributing to leisure satisfaction are: enjoying hobby, health, success in job, time together with family, religiosity, food, no fear of crime, job.

Myanmar: Negatively contributing to leisure satisfaction are sufficient medicine and food. Positively contributing to leisure satisfaction are most QOL related factors except high income, competition with other persons, being helpful to local community.

The Philippines: Those Philippino respondents who are not satisfied with hobby tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.

Singapore: Mildly positively contributing to leisure satisfaction is time together with family.

Mildly negatively contributing to leisure satisfaction are sufficient medicine and food.

Thailand: Those Thai respondents who are not satisfied with high income tend to be somewhat dissatisfied with leisure.

Vietnam: Mildly positively contributing to leisure satisfaction are luxury and success in job.

## 2.4.3 South Asia

Bangladesh: No QOL related factor affecting leisure satisfaction with statistical significance.

Bhutan: Possessing good things contribute positively to leisure satisfaction.

India: Those Indian respondents who are not satisfied with food, housing, health, medical income, time with family, human relation, job success, being famous, hobby and cosmetic tend to be dissatisfied with their leisure activities.

The Maldives: Negatively contributing to leisure satisfaction is possessing good things.

Nepal: No factor contributing to leisure satisfaction with statistical significance.

Pakistan: Positively contributing to leisure satisfaction is time together with family. Mildly contributing to leisure satisfaction are arts and culture, individualism, success in job.

Sri Lanka: Those Sri Lankan respondents who are not satisfied with medicine tend to be dissatisfied with leisure. More moderately, those who are not satisfied with health, with time together with family, and with religiosity tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.

## 2.4.4 Central Asia

Afghanistan: Those Afghanistan respondents who are not satisfied with time together with family tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.

Kazakhstan: Those Kazakhstani who are not satisfied with becoming famous tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.

Kyrgyzstan: Negatively contributing to leisure satisfaction are high income and food.

Mongolia: Positively contributing to leisure satis-
faction is being helpful to local community.

Tajikistan: Those Tajikistani respondents who are
not dissatisfied with time together with the
family tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.
More moderately, those Tajiki respondents
who are not satisfied with no fear of crime,
with arts and culture, and with gorgeous cloth
tend to be dissatisfied with leisure.

Turkmenistan: Mildly positively contributing to
leisure satisfaction are success in job, higher
education accessibility, and luxury while nega-
tively contributing to leisure satisfaction is
comfortable house ad mildly negatively con-
tributing to leisure satisfaction are high income.

Uzbekistan: Those Uzbekistani respondents who
are not satisfied with becoming famous tend to
be dissatisfied with leisure.

### 2.4.5  Outside Asia

Russia: Those Russian respondents who are s sat-
isfied with a job and rearing children tend to
be satisfied with leisure. More moderately
those Russian respondents who are satisfied
with time together with the family tend to be
satisfied with leisure.

Australia: Those Australian respondents who are
not satisfied with good human relations and
with arts and culture tend to be dissatisfied
with leisure.

The United States: Those American respondents
who are not satisfied with sufficient medicare,
with health, with a job, and with a hobby tend
to contribute to the less satisfaction with
leisure.

## 2.5  Relations Between Lifestyle Priorities and Leisure Satisfaction

The relationship of lifestyle priorities to leisure
satisfaction is best summarized in Table 2.6.
Those whose lifestyle priorities are hobby, family
time, and human relationship tend to register
high leisure satisfaction. It makes sense that
hobby, family time and human relationship are

those lifestyle priorities which are conducive to
leisure satisfaction. Those whose lifestyle priori-
ties register hobby tend to register high leisure
satisfaction residing in East and Southeast Asia.
Those whose lifestyle priorities register family
time register high leisure satisfaction, residing in
Southeast and South Asia.

Those whose lifestyle priorities are health,
sufficient medical, piety, no crime, housing,
enough food tend to register high leisure satisfac-
tion. Those whose lifestyle priorities register
health register high leisure satisfaction, residing
in Southeast Asia. Those whose lifestyle priori-
ties include Sufficient medical register high lei-
sure satisfaction, residing in India and Sri Lanka.
Those whose lifestyle priorities register piety
tend to register high leisure satisfaction, residing
in Malaysia and Myanmar. Those whose lifestyle
priorities register no crime tend to register high
leisure satisfaction, residing in China, Indonesia,
Malaysia, and Myanmar. Those whose lifestyle
priorities register housing tend to register high
leisure satisfaction, residing in China, Myanmar
and India. Those whose lifestyle priorities regis-
ter enough food tend to register high leisure satis-
faction, residing in Japan, Malaysia and India.

Those whose lifestyle priorities are job suc-
cess, higher education, individual self-expression,
being famous, using cosmetics also end to register
high leisure satisfaction. Those whose lifestyle
priorities include job success tend to register high
leisure satisfaction, residing in China, Malaysia,
and India. Those whose lifestyle priorities include
higher education tend to register high leisure
satisfaction, residing in China, Indonesia, and
Myanmar. Those whose lifestyle priorities include
individual self-expression tend to register high
leisure satisfaction, residing in Taiwan and
Myanmar. Those whose lifestyle priorities include
being famous tend to register being famous tend
to register high leisure satisfaction, residing in
Myanmar, India, and Kazakhstan. Those whose
lifestyle priorities register using cosmetic tend to
register high leisure satisfaction, residing in
China, India and Myanmar.

The diversity is immense in Asia. The rela-
tionship between leisure satisfaction and quality
of life in Asia must be examined carefully, coun-
try by country, subregion by subregion.

**Table 2.6** Lifestyles contributing to higher leisure satisfaction (summary)

| | *(17)Competition* | | *(18)Individual* | *(15)Culture* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Taiwan | Myanmar |
| | | | Myanmar | |
| *(13)Famous* | *(16)Cosmetic* | | *(14)Hobby* | *(19)Community* |
| Myanmar | China | | China | Indonesia |
| India | India | | Japan | |
| Kazakhstan | Myanmar | | South Korea | |
| | | | Taiwan | |
| | | | Cambodia | |
| | | | Malaysia | |
| | | | Philippines | |
| | | | Myanmar | |
| | | | India | |
| | | | United States | |
| *(8)Good Thing* | *(12)Job Success* | *(7)Higher Education* | *(20)Piety* | *(11)Human Relationship* |
| Myanmar | China | China | Malaysia | China |
| | Malaysia | Indonesia | Myanmar | Taiwan |
| | India | Myanmar | | Cambodia |
| | Russia | | | Indonesia |
| | | | | Myanmar |
| | | | | India |
| | *(9)Higher Income* | *(6)Having Job* | *(3)Health* | *(10)Family Time* |
| | India | Indonesia | Indonesia | Indonesia |
| | | Myanmar | Malaysia | Malaysia |
| | | | Myanmar | Myanmar |
| | | | India | India |
| | | | United States | Pakistan |
| | | | | Afghanistan |
| | | | | Tajikistan |
| | | | | Russia |
| | | | | Australia |
| | *(2)Housing* | *(1)Enough Food* | *(4)Sufficient Medical* | *(5)No Crime* |
| | China | Japan | India | China |
| | Myanmar | Malaysia | Sri Lanka | Indonesia |
| | India | India | | Malaysia |
| | | | | Myanmar |

## 2.6 Conclusion

I have examined leisure satisfaction in relation to quality of life using the AsiaBarometer survey data covering 29 Asian societies and three societies adjacent to Asia: the United States, Australia and Russia.

High on the leisure satisfaction level are firstly, maritime countries located in South and Southeast Asia, next come South Asian countries. Further down are some Southeastern countries. Central Asian countries come next to bottom. At bottom are listed East Asian countries. Barring maritime countries in Southeast and South Asia, leisure satisfaction is on the whole counter-proportional to per capita income level in Asia. It is along the same line of the relationship between happiness and per capita income level.

However, the level of leisure satisfaction varies from country to country. Rather than per capita income level, life priorities make difference to leisure satisfaction.

# Children's Leisure Activities and Subjective Well-Being: A Comparative Analysis of 16 Countries

Gwyther Rees

## Abstract

The way that children use their leisure time and how this affects their well-being are topical and much-debated issues. This chapter focuses on children's leisure time and activities in a sample of 16 countries across four continents, using data gathered through the international Children's Worlds survey. It compares evidence on the relative balance of leisure time and other activities; looks in more detail at the ways in which children spend their leisure time and how this varies between and within countries; and explores the associations between leisure and subjective well-being. The results show that there is considerable diversity in patterns of children's leisure time in different countries and this is partly linked to differences in national wealth. There is evidence of differences in children's leisure activities according to gender, age and material deprivation across most of the countries in the sample. In particular, gender patterns are fairly similar across the diverse set of countries surveyed. Finally, there is evidence of a link between more frequent participation in reading and in sports and children's higher overall subjective well-being. The chapter concludes with a discussion of implications of these findings and directions for future research.

## 3.1 Introduction

The way that children use their leisure time is a topical and highly-debated issue. There are concerns in many countries about possible decreases in the time that children spend on physically active leisure activities and increases in sedentary leisure time. In addition, new forms of leisure activity such as computer gaming; accessing the internet via computers and mobile phones; and the growing use of social media are perceived as carrying new risks for children, although there are also potential benefits. There is a growing body of research on the implications of different patterns and trends in children's leisure use, particularly in terms of physical health, mental health and behavioural outcomes. On the other hand, less is known about how different patterns of leisure time affect children's experienced quality of life and their subjective well-being.

This chapter focuses on children's leisure time and activities in a sample of 16 countries across four continents, using data gathered through the international Children's Worlds survey. It compares evidence on the relative balance of leisure

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time and other activities; looks in more detail at the ways in which children spend their leisure time and how this varies between and within countries; and explores the associations between leisure and subjective well-being. The Children's Worlds data has the potential to make a useful contribution to this field of research because of the diversity of participating countries and the information it collects about children's evaluations of their own well-being.

This introductory section reviews recent research on children's leisure use, with a particular focus on international comparative studies; and discusses the concept of subjective well-being and its possible links with leisure activities. It will also provide a brief overview of the Children's Worlds study, on which the chapter draws; and will outline the broad aims of the analysis which provides the material for this chapter.

## 3.2    Defining Leisure

Leisure time may be defined in two different ways (Haworth and Veal 2004). The first is a 'residual' definition: *'Today, the so-called residual definition of leisure, that is time which is not occupied by paid work, unpaid work or personal chores and obligations, is widely accepted for its proven utility in research … and is inclusive and non-normative'* (Haworth and Veal 2004, p. 1). In this definition, no value judgement is made about leisure time and activity which *'can be used for good or ill and that itself will often be a contested, subjective judgement'* (p. 2). An alternative 'experiential' definition focuses on '*dimensions of positive experience, such as intrinsic motivation and autonomy, and enjoyment'* (p. 2).

This chapter will take account of both of these ideas about leisure time. It will initially consider the residual definition – classifying leisure as including a number of activities which do not constitute work or chores. Then it will also go on to explore the links between those activities and children's self-reports of positive experience.

The residual definition of leisure discussed by Haworth and Veal originated in studies of adult time use, but it can also be applied to the lives of children. Whereas many children may not be involved in paid work, it seems reasonable to count their school attendance and associated activities as being comparable to notions of 'work' in the context of adults' time use. Moreover children are also engaged in unpaid work, personal chores and obligations, often making a time contribution to household work.

## 3.3    Research on Children's Leisure

Larson and Verma (1999) adopted the above residual definition of leisure in relation to a review of research on children's time use around the world. They separate children's activities into 'work' and 'leisure' (although they also acknowledge a third broad category of 'personal maintenance' – e.g. sleeping, eating), with 'work' being further sub-divided into labour and school work. They report wide variations in the amount of discretionary time that children have, even between groups of countries which are similar economically. They link these variations to geographic and cultural factors. For example, they argue that there is a difference in emphasis among economically developed countries, with a greater emphasis on education and on collectivist values in East Asia than in Europe and North America. These differences have implications for the quantity and nature of children's leisure time.

There has been substantial research on various aspects of children's leisure time use since Larson and Verma's review. In high-income countries, there has been a specific research focus on the balance of physical activity and sedentary time, and more recently on the impacts of new technologies. In low-income countries, research on leisure has had less of a prominent role as there has been a focus on children's (paid and unpaid) work including household responsibilities and the impact this has on the time they have available for education (Dornan and Woodhead 2015); so there is more limited evidence about children's leisure activities.

One of the key features of the comparative research in high-income countries has been the substantial differences in available leisure time and patterns of leisure between countries with fairly similar levels of economic development. Zuzanek (2005) reports on an analysis of adolescent time use in ten high-income countries using data from the HBSC study. There were variations between countries in the amount of free time available per week from around 37 to 49 h per week. There were also between-country variations in young people's participation in different kinds of leisure activities. For example, young people in Finland and Canada spent around 7 h per week on sports and outdoor activities compared to less than 4 h per week in the UK and the Netherlands. Santaliestra-Pasias et al. (2014) found substantial variations in screen-based time use among children aged 2–10 (using parental report) in eight European countries. Verloigne et al. (2012) also report variations in physical activity and sedentary time for children aged 10–12 in five European countries.

Zuzanek (2005) describes time trends in leisure activities in eight countries in Europe and North America between 1980 and 2000. There was some increase in available free time; inconsistent trends in television watching but substantial increases in computer use; and, in many countries, decreasing levels of physical activity and engagement in reading. Zuzanek argues that while there is some evidence of convergence in patterns of time use across countries, some differences between countries persist, even within this group of similar high-income countries. Marshall et al. (2006) also found no increase in hours of viewing for children with access to a television set over 50 years – based on a systematic review of 539 independent samples (the large majority in North America and Europe). In contrast to one of Zuzanek's conclusions, Ekelund et al. (2011) did not find conclusive evidence of a time-related decline in young people's physical activity based on a review of research in Europe, North America and Australia.

One hypothesis that has been explored is that there is an exchange of time between physical activity and sedentary time. However, the evidence on this hypothesis is inconclusive. Santaliestra-Pasias et al. (2012) found no association in a sample of European countries between screen time and physical activity and also cite other studies with similar findings. Marshall et al. (2006) point out that one of the issues is that TV viewing is not a good marker of sedentary behaviour because '*contemporary youth find many ways to be inactive*' (p. 343). They also note that evidence suggests that young people become less physically active from the age of 13 but this is not a time when TV viewing increases. Girls are also less active than boys (see also below) and they may find other ways of spending sedentary time.

Beyond this research in high-income countries, there have also been studies and reviews of physical activity and television viewing across a wider range of countries. Tremblay et al. (2014) found, in a study of 15 countries across five continents, wide variations in total physical activity levels – which were highest in New Zealand and Mozambique, and lowest in Scotland – and in sedentary behaviours – which were highest in Canada, Nigeria, Scotland and South Africa and lowest in Ghana and Kenya. Braithwaite et al. (2013) looked at the association between increasing levels of television viewing and obesity in children (18 countries) and adolescents (37 countries) globally. There was a wide range of percentages of children and young people watching television for three or more hours per day, ranging among adolescents from 17% in China to 78% in Cote d'Ivoire; and among younger children from 8% in India to 36% in Nigeria.

One of the key issues addressed by a number of these studies has been the extent to which children and young people meet minimum guidelines for physical activity and do not exceed maximum guidelines for screen-based time. Hallal et al. (2012) obtained estimates of physical activity for 105 countries and found that 80% of young people aged 13–15 do not do one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day. In Europe, Santaliestra-Pasias et al. (2012) and Rey-Lopez et al. (2010) found that a high proportion of children and adolescents respectively exceeded screen-time guidelines. These patterns are increasingly seen globally. Braithwaite et al.

(2013) report that in a broader sample of countries, 89% of adolescents and 79% of children watched television for more than 1 h per day.

An emerging issue over the last decade or so has been the rapid increase in children's internet and social media use. For example, Livingstone et al. (2014) report that, in 2010, 53% of children aged 9–16 in seven European countries used the internet at all in their bedroom; but, by 2014, 66% were doing this at least weekly. Use of the internet while 'out and about' also doubled between 2010 and 2014. These trends inevitable have substantial implications for the balance of children's leisure time.

Cutting across these broad descriptive findings, many of the studies have reported on variations in leisure activities according to factors such as gender, age and poverty.

Larson and Verma (1999) reported that in non-industrial countries girls have less leisure time than boys, but that there are no gender differences in industrial countries. Zuzanek reports fairly consistent gender differences across countries in leisure activities – girls spent more time reading and pursuing hobbies while boys spent more time watching television, participating in sports and using computers. Rey-Lopez et al. (2010) found differences in the nature of screen-based media usage for males (more TV and computer games) and females (more internet usage). Hallal et al. (2012) and Leech et al. (2014) both report lower levels of physical activity among girls than boys.

There is also some evidence of age-related trends in leisure activities. Zuzanek reports that in some countries there are sharp decreases in physical activities in later adolescence. Marshall et al. (2006) find that television viewing peaks at around 9–12 years old and then decreases during adolescence.

Larson and Verma (1999) highlighted socio-economic gradients in children's leisure activities. They point out that although increasing national wealth is associated with increasing television viewing among children; at the same time, it is children in poorer families within a country who spend more time watching television. Recent research by Lang et al. (2016) found a substantial

negative correlation between income inequality and physical fitness in children in a sample of 50 countries.

As well as family economic factors, there is the potential for neighbourhood factors to affect children's patterns of leisure activities. Anaby et al. (2014) found evidence of the influence of enabling and hindering factors in the family, school and community environments on individual children's participation in a range of activities. In terms of cross-national comparisons, Tremblay et al. (2014) found that, while the community and environmental conditions promoting physical activity tend to be better in higher income countries, conditions such safety and availability of facilities did not necessarily translate into higher overall physical activity in those countries.

As outlined earlier, a key aspect of research on children's leisure activities has been to explore concerns about the impact of different patterns of leisure use on outcomes for children.

There have been some conflicting findings on the health implications of television viewing with some studies finding a negative impact and other studies not. However two recent large-scale cross-national studies in diverse countries (Braithwaite et al. 2013; Katzmarzyk et al. 2015) have found links between more frequent television viewing and high BMI/obesity.

There have been concerns about the implications of the increasing use of digital technologies by children discussed earlier – including risks of cyberbullying, sexual exploitation, and psychological harm – and there is some evidence to support these concerns in European countries (Livingstone and Smith 2014) and also in Brazil (Barbosa et al. 2013). However Livingstone and Smith argue that these risks are linked to pre-existing factors in children's lives. There are also many benefits of digital engagement – including educational uses, access to information, social relationships and having fun. Livingstone (2016) proposes that researchers should take a balanced view of risks and benefits and to consider a rights-based approach to studies in this field.

Eime et al. (2013) undertook a systematic review of the benefits of sports participation for

children and adolescents. They identified 30 studies, 29 of which were exclusively in high-income countries in North America and Europe; and report a range of positive physical and psychological health outcomes associated with higher levels of sports activity, although they acknowledge that this does not constitute proof of a causal link. A systematic review by Janssen and Le Blanc also found evidence of numerous health benefits of physical activity in children and young people.

### 3.3.1 Subjective Well-Being

This chapter consider the links between children's leisure activities and their subjective well-being. The concept of subjective well-being refers to people's evaluations and feelings about their own lives. Conceptually it is commonly considered to be divided into cognitive and affective components (Diener 1999). Cognitive subjective well-being refers to people's satisfaction with their lives as a whole or specific aspects of their lives – such as friendships or health. Affective subjective well-being refers to people's moods and emotions which may be positive or negative. There is evidence that positive and negative affect are relatively independent of one another.

The field of research on subjective well-being is closely related to the development of the positive psychology movement (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). In this sense it is a relatively new field and much more research so far has been done on subjective well-being in relation to adults than children. However, there is a growing body of evidence on children's subjective well-being including the development of conceptual frameworks (e.g. Fattore et al. 2007; Thoilliez 2011; Huebner and Dew 1996); on the development and validation of measures (e.g. Huebner 1991; Cummins and Lau 2005; Casas and Rees 2015; Casas 2016) and explorations of factors associated with variations in subjective well-being (see summary in Huebner et al. 2012).

The potential value of measuring subjective well-being as an indicator of how a society is doing, to complement more traditional economic measures such as GDP and economic growth, has been proposed by a number of writers (e.g. Diener 2000; O'Donnell et al. 2014). In the UK, for example, measures of subjective well-being have been included in a framework of national well-being measures developed by the Office for National Statistics (2016).

### 3.3.2 Leisure and Subjective Well-Being

The ways in which people spend their leisure time and the choices that they make about this may be linked to their well-being through a number of routes. For example, according to activity theory (Brajša-Žganec et al. 2011) physical activity may be linked to increases in satisfaction with one's health and one's body while large amounts of sedentary activity may have the opposite effect. Purposeful leisure activities may also increase feelings of competence; while leisure activities which are shared with others may bring increased satisfaction with social relationships. Another relevant conceptual framework regarding the link between leisure activities and subjective well-being is that of basic psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000). Along similar lines, based on a literature review, Newman et al. (2014) propose five psychological mechanisms linking leisure to subjective well-being – detachment-recovery, autonomy, mastery, meaning and affiliation.

It is important to acknowledge the potential bi-directional links between leisure activities and subjective well-being. While leisure activities may have an effect on subjective well-being, it is also plausible that subjective well-being will have an effect on leisure activities. For example, people who are feeling happier may be more inclined to be physically active and engage in social leisure activities, while people who are feeling less satisfied with life may become more sedentary and solitary. This issue of causal directions links to controversies about 'bottom-up' and top-down' models of subjective well-being

(Heller et al. 2004) which are discussed in relation to leisure engagement in Kuykendall et al. (2015).

In relation to adult populations, the meta-analysis by Kuykendall et al. (2015) of studies primarily undertaken in North America and Europe finds evidence of modest bi-directional associations between leisure engagement and subjective well-being. The link from leisure engagement to subjective well-being is mediated by leisure satisfaction. They also cite evidence that leisure interventions can improve subjective well-being.

Turning to research on children and young people, Leversen et al. (2012) explore Ryan and Deci's basic psychological needs framework using data from over 3000 adolescents in Norway. They find that two aspects of psychological well-being – competence and relatedness – fully mediated the relationship between participation in leisure activities and life satisfaction. Autonomy also had a direct effect on life satisfaction but was not a mediator in this context. On the other hand, Trainor et al. (2010), in a study of young people around the age of 15 years old in Australia find that leisure activities are only related to subjective well-being to the extent that adolescents who are 'psychologically healthy' are likely to engage in more structured activities which are associated with higher subjective well-being. Huysmans et al. (2005) found that in a sample of young people aged 15–18 in the Netherlands, there was only very weak evidence of a link between different patterns of leisure time use and a range of emotional and behavioural outcomes.

Zuzanek discuss the positive and negative associations between different types of leisure activities and children's well-being. He notes that while screen-based activities may take time away from other activities such as physical activity and may have negative psychological effects (e.g. viewing violent materials) there are also benefits for children – reducing stress levels and serving as '*an indispensable emotional lubricant*' (p. 406). Sports and reading had more unequivocally positive associations with higher emotional well-being and happiness. Zuzanek argues that 'positive emotional and developmental outcomes

result from a balanced mix of leisure's developmental and relaxing components' (p. 407). The systematic review of sports participation by Eime et al. (2013) mentioned above found evidence of a number of positive well-being outcomes including higher life satisfaction, happiness, self-confidence, and better social relationships.

In summary, while there is some evidence of the links between leisure and subjective well-being in childhood and youth, including comparative international studies, this has primarily been undertaken in high-income countries. There are therefore important gaps in our knowledge of this topic in a more diverse range of countries and contexts.

### 3.3.3 The Children's Worlds Study and Data

Children's Worlds[1] is an international survey of children's lives and well-being initiated in 2010 by a group of researchers on child well-being from different countries with the aim of generating comparative data on how children experience and view their lives in different contexts around the world. The second wave of the survey conducted in 2013–2016 has included over 60,000 children in 18 countries across four continents. The data used in this chapter is taken from the first 16 countries to complete the survey. The countries were selected purposively to represent a range of economic, geographic and cultural contexts. The sample includes two low-income countries (Ethiopia and Nepal); five middle-income countries (Algeria, Colombia, South Africa, Romania and Turkey) and nine high-income countries (Estonia, Germany, Israel, Malta, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Spain and the UK).

Within each country the survey was managed by a national research team and consisted of self-completion questionnaires administered to nationally representative samples of children aged around 8, 10 and 12 years of age in mainstream schools. Appropriate ethical clearance for the research was gained in each participating

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[1] Project website: www.isciweb.org

country. Further details about the survey are available in Rees and Main (2015).

The data used in this chapter is taken from the surveys of 10- and 12-year-olds. The total sample includes 37,099 children. The data from 8-year-olds is not included as there were a number of differences in the way that key questions were asked with this age group which means that it is not completely comparable with that from older children. The questionnaires for 10- and 12-year-olds contained over 100 items, covering a wide range of topics in children's lives relating to family, money and possessions, friends, local area, school, self, time use, rights and overall subjective well-being. From this set of questions, relevant items for the topic of this chapter have been selected as follows.

### 3.3.3.1 Time Use

Children in both age groups were asked a set of questions about how frequently they spent time doing seven activities – playing sports or doing exercise, reading for fun, watching television, using a computer, helping with housework, doing homework and taking classes outside school time. Responses were on a four-point scale from 'Rarely or never' to 'Every day or almost'. For this chapter the first four items representing different types of leisure are used, and some use if also made of the fifth item about housework, which is treated as an indicator of other demands on children's time. To simplify the analysis and presentation of results, binary variables are used indicating whether the child did each activity 'Every day or almost' or not.

### 3.3.3.2 Demographic Variables

Children's gender and age group are used in the analysis. The age group is the target age for each survey – 10 and 12 years old. Because the surveys were school-based some children were a year or two younger or older than the target age range.

### 3.3.3.3 Material Deprivation

The questionnaires included a list of eight items or experiences which children in all countries were asked whether they had or had access to. These were – clothes in good condition to go to school, access to a computer at home, access to the internet, a mobile phone, one's own bedroom, books to read for fun, a family car for transportation, and one's own equipment to listen to music. Response options were 'Yes', 'No' and 'Don't know'. A deprivation score was calculated ranging from zero to eight indicating the number of items which the child lacked access to.

### 3.3.3.4 Quality of the Local Area

The analysis uses two statement-based questions about facilities and safety in the local area: 'In my area there are enough places to play or have a good time' and 'I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in'. Responses were on a five-point agreement scale from 'Not at all agree' to 'Completely agree'.

### 3.3.3.5 Subjective Well-Being

Two multi-item scales of overall well-being are used – measuring life satisfaction and positive affect respectively. The life satisfaction scale is a modification of a scale originally developed by Huebner (1991). It consists of five statements, for example 'My life is going well' with responses on an 11-point scale from 'Not at all agree' to 'Completely agree'. Responses for each item are summed and the resulting score is doubled so that it is on a scale from 0 to 100. The positive affect scale is based on ideas originally proposed by Russell (1980) and consists of six positive moods and emotions – e.g. 'Happy', 'Full of energy' – which children were asked to say how much they had felt within the last two weeks on an 11-point scale from 'Not at all' to 'Extremely'. These six responses are also summed and transformed onto a scale from 0 to 100.

In addition, a selection of single-item satisfaction questions from the survey are used covering children's satisfaction with time use, freedom, health, self-confidence, one's body, friendships and family relationships. These are linked to themes identified in the literature review. Each of these items used an 11-point response scale from 'Not at all satisfied' to 'Completely satisfied'.

### 3.3.3.6 Statistical Analysis

Each country sample in the Children's Worlds survey is weighted to be as representative as possible of the target population and these weightings have been used in all analysis; and the clustering in the data set due to the sample being done in schools is also taken into account in calculating confidence intervals. Two statistical tests are used. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show the results of chi-square tests, while Table 3.4 summarises the results of linear regression models with subjective well-being measures as the dependent variables. Tables distinguish between findings that are statistically significant with 95% and 99% confidence respectively.

### 3.3.4 Aims of This Chapter

In light of the previous research reviewed earlier in this introduction, this chapter has three aims.

The first is to describe how children spend their leisure time in the diverse range of countries and contexts included in the Children's Worlds data. There are relatively few recent comparative studies which span countries in different continents and with different levels of economic wealth; and this kind of description can therefore make an important contribution to understanding international variations in children's leisure time.

The second aim is to look at some of the factors associated with variations in leisure activities between and within countries. This aspect of the analysis considers gender and age variations; and also the associations of leisure patterns with household economic factors and the quality of the local environment. It is valuable to compare similarities and differences in the patterns of associations of these factors across countries.

Finally, the chapter considers the extent to which different aspects of children's leisure use are associated with how they feel about and evaluate their lives. This is a relatively under-researched area, but also an important one given the increasing interest in the topic of subjective well-being. This aspect of the chapter considers not only the links between leisure activities and children's overall sense of well-being, but also

the extent to which these links might be understood in terms of children's evaluations of specific aspects of their lives. This work is exploratory and points the way to some potentially important more detailed research to understand the pathways between leisure use and overall perceived quality of life.

After presenting the findings in relation to these three aims, the chapter concludes with a consideration of the strengths and limitations of this analysis; identifies potential implications and also discussed future directions for comparative international research on children's time use.

## 3.4 Comparing Children's Leisure Activities Across Countries

As anticipated, the frequency of children's participation in the four different types of leisure activities varied substantially across the 16 countries (Table 3.1). Participation in sports was most frequent in Poland and Norway (above 60% of children) and least frequent in Ethiopia, South Korea, Algeria and Nepal (below 40% of children). Participation in reading for pleasure was most popular in Malta and least popular in Ethiopia, South Korea and Estonia. There were very wide variations in computer usage, with over 60% of children using a computer most days in Estonia, Israel and Malta and less than one in ten doing so in Ethiopia and Nepal. There was a similar picture for television watching – over 80% of children did this most days or every day in Estonia, Norway, the UK and Poland compared to less than 40% of children in Ethiopia and Nepal.

The patterns in computer usage, television watching and sports participation were all associated with national wealth. Children in wealthier countries were significantly more likely to participate in sports,[2] use computers[3] and watch television[4] most days. There was no apparent link

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[2]Pearson correlation with GNI per capita = 0.49.

[3]Pearson correlation with GNI per capita = 0.38.

[4]Pearson correlation with GNI per capita = 0.65.

**Table 3.1** Percentage of children participating in activities most days by country

|            | Sports | Read | Computer | TV  | House- work | GNI per capita |
|------------|--------|------|----------|-----|-------------|----------------|
| Algeria    | 38%    | 39%  | 34%      | 58% | 65%         | 13,280         |
| Colombia   | 52%    | 32%  | 51%      | 75% | 51%         | 11,560         |
| Estonia    | 56%    | 26%  | 68%      | 85% | 46%         | 24,270         |
| Ethiopia   | 22%    | 23%  | 4%       | 21% | 65%         | 1250           |
| Germany    | 53%    | 38%  | 31%      | 77% | 34%         | 44,640         |
| Israel     | 60%    | 38%  | 64%      | 78% | 53%         | 31,070         |
| Malta      | 48%    | 51%  | 64%      | 73% | 49%         | 26,410         |
| Nepal      | 40%    | 40%  | 8%       | 35% | 72%         | 2170           |
| Norway     | 61%    | 33%  | 46%      | 83% | 55%         | 66,910         |
| Poland     | 68%    | 32%  | 56%      | 80% | 63%         | 22,600         |
| Romania    | 57%    | 43%  | 49%      | 78% | 65%         | 18,100         |
| S Africa   | 58%    | 48%  | 40%      | 71% | 62%         | 12,260         |
| S Korea    | 37%    | 25%  | 24%      | 69% | 25%         | 32,350         |
| Spain      | 57%    | 39%  | 48%      | 74% | 60%         | 32,160         |
| Turkey     | 52%    | 48%  | 39%      | 67% | 32%         | 18,030         |
| UK         | 55%    | 37%  | 54%      | 81% | 49%         | 37,630         |

between national wealth and the frequency of children reading for pleasure. This may be due to substitution of leisure activities in low-income countries. Children in Nepal and Ethiopia were more likely to frequently read for pleasure than to use computers or watch television.

The links between media use and national wealth may be explained by access to specific resources within the home. For example, in most countries more than 90% of children had a television at home, but in three countries the percentages were lower – Ethiopia (27%), Nepal (69%) and Algeria (76%). Similar patterns were evident for access to a computer at home. Local area factors such as the availability of leisure facilities may explain the link between sports participation and national wealth and this is explored in a later section.

As well as a direct effect of economic prosperity, cross-national variations in children's leisure activities may also be explained by differences in other demands on children's time. One such demand is for children to contribute to household work. Table 3.1 also shows the percentage of children in each country who do housework most days or every day. Children's participation in housework was most frequent in Nepal, Ethiopia and Algeria and least frequent in South Korea, Turkey and Germany. There was a clear negative association here between national wealth and the

frequency of participation in housework.[5] Importantly there was also a negative association between participation in housework and media usage. Countries where children most frequently did housework also tended to be countries where children least frequently watched television and used computers. On the other hand there was not such a clear link at a national level between frequency of housework and sports participation, although it is notable that the three countries with the highest frequencies of housework were also among the countries with the lowest frequency of sports participation.

This data on children's daily activities therefore paints a rich picture of the diversity of children's lives across these 16 countries. The majority of children in high-income countries watched television most days and levels of computer usage tended also to be high. In contrast with high-income countries, children in low- and middle-income countries tended to spend substantially more time on household chores and less time on media consumption in particular.

Nevertheless there is considerable diversity in leisure patterns, even taking account of differences in national wealth. For example, children in South Korea and Germany – two of the four wealthiest countries in the sample – had much

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[5]Pearson correlation with GNI per capita = −0.42.

lower rates of frequent computer usage than Norway and the UK. Other factors that may explain these variations are cultural expectations and parental choice and control over how children spend their time. The particularly high rate of sports participation in Poland is notable; while children in South Africa were more likely to frequently play sports than their peers in many wealthier countries. Clearly a full understanding of these patterns requires a deeper exploration of the context within each country. Some aspects of this are covered in later sections.

## 3.5 Comparing Children's Leisure Activities Within Countries

### 3.5.1 Gender and Leisure

In addition to the differences in frequencies of leisure activities between countries discussed in the previous section, there were substantial differences in the way that girls and boy spent their leisure time in many countries. These differences are summarised in Table 3.2. In most countries, boys played sports and exercised more frequently than girls; while girls more often read for fun. There were relatively few gender differences in frequency of watching television. In ten countries boys tended to use the computer more frequently than girls. Even in countries where the differences were not statistically significant the patterns tended to be followed. The overall picture here, then, is that gender differences in children's leisure activities are fairly similar across countries – with girls tending to read more but play sports and use the computer less.

It can also be seen from Table 3.2 that in most countries boys tended to report involvement in a greater number of leisure activities than girls. Although the information in the data set does not enable an exact comparison of amounts of time, this pattern may indicate that boys have more leisure time than girls. Some support for this is provided by a comparison of the proportion of girls and boys who participated in housework on most days or every day. In 14 out of the 16 countries (the exceptions were Nepal and Malta), girls were significantly more likely to participate frequently in housework than boys. Thus there are some tentative indications here of a different balance of time availability between boys and girls, with girls possibly having more household responsibilities and

**Table 3.2** Gender variations in frequency of leisure activities by country

|  | Sports and exercising | | | Reading for fun | | | Watching TV | | | Using a computer | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Girl | | Boy | Girl | | Boy | Girl | | Boy | Girl | | Boy |
| Algeria | 26% | << | 48% | 40% | | 38% | 54% | << | 62% | 29% | << | 38% |
| Colombia | 45% | < | 60% | 36% | >> | 28% | 74% | | 77% | 52% | | 50% |
| Estonia | 51% | << | 61% | 32% | >> | 21% | 85% | | 84% | 63% | << | 73% |
| Ethiopia | 17% | << | 27% | 23% | | 23% | 23% | | 20% | 3% | | 4% |
| Germany | 46% | << | 60% | 44% | >> | 32% | 77% | | 77% | 18% | << | 45% |
| Israel | 53% | << | 66% | 42% | > | 35% | 80% | | 75% | 63% | | 66% |
| Malta | 43% | << | 53% | 56% | >> | 46% | 72% | | 73% | 62% | | 66% |
| Nepal | 37% | < | 42% | 41% | | 39% | 35% | | 35% | 6% | | 9% |
| Norway | 56% | << | 68% | 37% | >> | 28% | 85% | >> | 81% | 40% | << | 53% |
| Poland | 65% | << | 71% | 39% | >> | 26% | 80% | | 80% | 51% | << | 62% |
| Romania | 51% | << | 63% | 51% | >> | 37% | 76% | | 79% | 42% | << | 56% |
| S Africa | 51% | << | 66% | 51% | > | 45% | 71% | | 70% | 38% | < | 42% |
| S Korea | 26% | << | 51% | 23% | << | 27% | 72% | >> | 66% | 17% | << | 31% |
| Spain | 44% | << | 69% | 44% | >> | 34% | 74% | | 75% | 45% | < | 51% |
| Turkey | 32% | << | 71% | 53% | >> | 42% | 68% | | 67% | 33% | << | 46% |
| UK | 47% | << | 62% | 43% | >> | 33% | 84% | >> | 78% | 52% | | 56% |

Key:< = higher frequency for boys, p < .05; << = higher frequency for boys, p < .01
> = higher frequency for girls, p < .05; >> = higher frequency for girls, p < .01

boys having more leisure time. However this is not certain as previous research has indicated that while in many countries girls do more work within the home, boys are more likely to do work outside the home. Unfortunately a question about working outside the home was not included in this wave of the Children's Worlds survey.

### 3.5.2 Age and Leisure

There were also some quite substantial age variations, even across the limited age range of 2 years covered in this data (Table 3.3). Between the ages of 10 and 12, frequent reading for fun decreased in all countries and in 14 countries (with the exceptions of Colombia and Turkey) this decrease was statistically significant. There were significant decreases in frequently participating in sports in eight countries; while the frequency of screen-based activities increased in many countries. The exception to this latter point was that frequent watching of television decreased in Algeria between the ages of 10 and 12. This is an unusual pattern and the reasons for this are not clear.

This analysis provides some insights into the changing balance of children's time across this age range. In six countries – Estonia, Israel, Poland, South Africa, South Korea and Spain – the decrease in sports participation went hand-in-hand with an increase in frequency screen-based activities. This pattern is suggestive of the type of shift from physically active to sedentary activities that was discussed in the introductory section. However, this is not a consistent pattern, even in high-income countries. In the UK there was only a small (and non-significant) decrease in sports participation while computer usage increased substantially. In Norway and Malta there was no change in frequency of sports participation while there was evidence of some increase in screen-based activities. Therefore a greater understanding of the contextual factors within each country that lead to these differences would be informative.

It is also notable that in the two low-income countries in the survey – Nepal and Ethiopia – the decreases in sports participation and reading were not accompanied by increases in screen-based leisure time. Instead, in these two countries, there was an increase, between the ages of 10 and 12, in the frequency of children contributing their time to work around the home.

**Table 3.3** Age variations in frequency of leisure activities by country

| | Sports and exercising | | | Reading for fun | | | Watching TV | | | Using a computer | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 10 | | 12 | 10 | | 12 | 10 | | 12 | 10 | | 12 |
| Algeria | 38% | | 38% | 45% | >> | 34% | 64% | >> | 53% | 33% | | 35% |
| Colombia | 52% | | 53% | 33% | | 31% | 71% | << | 80% | 46% | << | 56% |
| Estonia | 59% | >> | 53% | 32% | >> | 21% | 81% | << | 88% | 60% | << | 76% |
| Ethiopia | 24% | > | 19% | 26% | > | 20% | 24% | | 19% | 4% | | 3% |
| Germany | 57% | >> | 49% | 46% | >> | 31% | 75% | | 79% | 31% | | 32% |
| Israel | 63% | > | 56% | 44% | >> | 32% | 75% | < | 81% | 59% | << | 69% |
| Malta | 48% | | 48% | 54% | > | 48% | 67% | << | 78% | 59% | << | 69% |
| Nepal | 42% | | 38% | 48% | >> | 32% | 36% | | 33% | 9% | | 7% |
| Norway | 61% | | 62% | 40% | >> | 25% | 78% | << | 88% | 43% | | 48% |
| Poland | 72% | >> | 64% | 39% | >> | 25% | 80% | | 80% | 49% | << | 64% |
| Romania | 60% | | 55% | 51% | >> | 36% | 74% | << | 82% | 44% | << | 54% |
| S Africa | 65% | >> | 51% | 52% | > | 44% | 70% | | 72% | 44% | << | 36% |
| S Korea | 47% | >> | 27% | 36% | >> | 13% | 66% | << | 72% | 21% | < | 26% |
| Spain | 61% | > | 53% | 49% | >> | 29% | 69% | << | 80% | 36% | << | 59% |
| Turkey | 53% | | 51% | 51% | | 45% | 61% | << | 74% | 35% | << | 44% |
| UK | 57% | | 53% | 49% | >> | 26% | 79% | | 82% | 49% | << | 59% |

Key: < = higher frequency with age, p < .05; << = higher frequency with age, p < .01
> = lower frequency with age, p < .05; >> = lower frequency with age, p < .01

## 3.6 Family Factors, Local Area Factors and Leisure

### 3.6.1 Household Poverty and Leisure

Differences in children's leisure activities in richer and poorer countries have already been discussed above. However it is also possible that, within countries, there are differences in how children spend their leisure time depending on family economic status.

In fact there were strong patterns here in most countries, based on children's level of material deprivation. Frequency of participation in sports, watching television and using a computer all varied according to material deprivation in most countries. Children with higher levels of deprivation were significantly less likely to participate in sports in all countries except Turkey and South Korea. More deprived children were also significant less likely to watch television in all countries except Norway and Poland; and to use a computer in all countries except Poland and South Korea. There were fewer socio-economic differences in frequency of reading for fun. Children with higher levels of material deprivation were significantly less likely to read for fun frequently in Algeria, Ethiopia, Israel, Poland, South Africa and Turkey.

There are some limitations to these findings because the material deprivation score did include access to computers and books to read. However the broad pattern across the four leisure activities clearly indicates lower leisure participation rates for children in households with higher levels of material deprivation. This suggests that, in poorer families, children's leisure options are being limited by the material circumstances they experience.

### 3.6.2 The Local Environment and Leisure

In addition to the potential constraints on children's leisure activities due to family economic factors, the nature of the local environment may also facilitate or hinder children's participation in particular leisure activities. The questionnaire included two questions which are relevant to this topic – asking children whether there were enough places to play and have a good time in the local area and also whether the child felt safe in the local area.

After taking account of individual material deprivation, children's assessment of the availability of places to play was a significant predictor of sports participation in all countries. Children who said there were more places to play in their local area were more likely to frequently participate in sports. Feelings of safety in the local area also predicted likelihood of sports participation in all countries. There was some additional evidence of gender differences here. In nine countries girls felt less safe in their local area than boys but in only two countries – South Africa and Israel – was there evidence of a significant interaction between gender and feelings of safety that affected the likelihood of sports participation. In these two countries feelings of safety were more relevant predictors of sports participation for girls than boys.

It might be expected that lack of facilities and feelings of not being safe in the local area would be associated with a greater likelihood of indoor screen-based leisure activities. However this does not appear to be the case. Once household material deprivation was taken into account there was limited evidence of associations between local area factors and the frequency of watching television and using a computer.

In summary, the findings presented about on household economic factors and local environmental factors indicate significant structural inequalities in children's leisure time in all of the countries participating in the survey.

## 3.7 Leisure and Well-Being

The final issue to be addressed is the extent to which children's leisure time is associated with their sense of well-being. This issue was explored by using linear regression models to jointly examine the extent to which frequently partici-

pating in sports, reading for pleasure, watching television and using a computer predicted children's subjective well-being, while controlling for the effects of gender, age group and material deprivation.

The significant predictors for positive affect and life satisfaction are summarised in Table 3.4. From a conceptual viewpoint it might be expected that leisure activities would have a greater impact on positive affect than life satisfaction. However, this was not the case, the explanatory power of the models for both variables were quite similar in most countries. The significant predictors were also quite similar for both measures of overall subjective well-being.

For positive affect, frequent participation in sports predicted higher well-being in all countries; and reading did so in 11 countries. In nine countries frequent television watching also predicted higher positive affect. Frequent computer usage had a small negative impact on positive affect in several countries, and in Poland this impact was statistically significant.

For life satisfaction, the patterns were similar, frequent reading was associated with higher life satisfaction in all countries except Nepal and the UK. Frequent sports participation was also associated with higher life satisfaction in most countries. Frequent television watching showed a positive impact in half of countries. Again there was some evidence of a significant negative impact of frequent computer usage, this time in Germany and Poland.

The overall picture from this analysis is that children who frequently participated in sports and reading for pleasure tended to be happier and more satisfied with their lives. The benefits of frequent television watching were more limited while there was no evidence that frequently using a computer was beneficial for well-being and a small amount of evidence that it may be associated with lower well-being.

Based on the idea that people's overall subjective well-being is influenced by their satisfaction with specific aspects of their life, it is interesting to explore the extent to which children's participation in leisure activities was associated with variations in their satisfaction with different aspects of life. As explained in the introduction, there are a number of aspects of life that might reasonably be affected by children's leisure activities including satisfaction with time use, freedom, health, self-confidence, one's body,

**Table 3.4** Leisure activities that significantly predict subjective well-being (controlling for gender, age group and deprivation) by country

|  | Positive affect | | | | Life satisfaction | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Sports | Read | TV | Computer | Sports | Read | TV | Computer |
| Algeria | ++ | ++ | ++ |  |  | ++ | ++ |  |
| Colombia | ++ | ++ |  |  |  | ++ |  | + |
| Estonia | ++ | ++ | ++ |  | ++ | ++ | + |  |
| Ethiopia | ++ | ++ |  |  | + | ++ |  |  |
| Germany | ++ |  | ++ |  | ++ | ++ | ++ | − |
| Israel | ++ | ++ | ++ |  | ++ | ++ | ++ |  |
| Malta | ++ | ++ | ++ |  | ++ | ++ | + |  |
| Nepal | ++ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Norway | ++ |  |  |  | ++ | ++ |  |  |
| Poland | ++ |  | ++ | − − | ++ | + | ++ | − |
| Romania | ++ | ++ | ++ |  |  | ++ | + |  |
| S Africa | ++ | ++ |  |  | + | ++ |  |  |
| S Korea | ++ | ++ | + |  | ++ | ++ |  |  |
| Spain | ++ | + |  |  | ++ | + |  |  |
| Turkey | ++ | ++ |  |  |  | ++ |  |  |
| UK | ++ |  | ++ |  | ++ |  | + |  |

Key: + = positive coefficient, $p < .05$; ++ = positive coefficient, $p < .01$
− = negative coefficient, $p < .05$; − − = negative coefficient, $p < .01$

friendships and family relationships. In most of these cases it is plausible that more frequent participation in leisure activities would improve satisfaction; but it is also possible, for example, that very frequent use of computers could negatively impact on satisfaction with aspects such as health, one's body and family relationships.

Using linear regression analysis for the pooled sample, controlling for gender and material deprivation, there was evidence that frequency of leisure activities made a significant contribution to explaining variation in satisfaction with all six of the above aspects of life. The strongest effect was for satisfaction with time use where the four leisure activities explained over 4% of the variation, after accounting for the effect of gender and material deprivation. All four variables made a significant positive contribution. For the remaining five variables the explanatory power of the leisure items was 3.7% for satisfaction with self-confidence, 3.1% for satisfaction with body, 2.5% for satisfaction with freedom, 2.1% for satisfaction with health, 1.9% for satisfaction with friendships and 1.3% for satisfaction with family life. Participation in sports and reading for pleasure made a significant contribution to all models, with participation in sports always making the largest contribution. Frequently using a computer was only associated with increased satisfaction with freedom, but there was no evidence in the pooled sample that it had a detrimental impact on satisfaction with other aspects.

In summary, if one assumes a causal directional link from participation in leisure activities to subjective well-being, sports participation appears to have the strongest effect on satisfaction with each of these aspects of life and to make a significant contribution to higher levels of subjective well-being in children. Reading for pleasure also has a generally positive effect on satisfaction with specific aspects of life.

## 3.8   Conclusions

The analysis presented in this chapter makes a contribution to understanding the diversity of children's lives between countries with similar and differing characteristics and between children within countries.

The first goal of the analysis was to describe the way that children spend their leisure time across countries. The Children's Worlds survey includes a diverse range of countries and contributes to the relatively small body of comparative evidence on children's leisure activities which extends beyond high-income countries. Children's accounts of their leisure activities show substantial diversity across countries, in line with previous published findings on physical activity (Tremblay et al. 2014) and on television viewing (Braithwaite et al. 2013).

One factor that can explain some of this diversity is national prosperity. Children in wealthier countries are, in general, much more likely to play sports, watch television and spend time using computers than children in less wealth countries. This is complemented by evidence of much higher frequency of housework among children in the poorer countries in the survey. However, as Larson and Verma (1999) point out, economic development is only a partial explanation for diversity in children's leisure time, and it is likely that cultural and environmental factors also have a role play. For example, it would be interesting to understand why, in the Children's Worlds survey, frequency of children's computer use in the UK and Norway is so much higher than in economically similar countries such as Germany and South Korea; and why sports participation in South Africa and Colombia is comparable to that in much wealthier countries.

These diverse patterns are likely to be best understood by a detailed contextual understanding of each country. For example, Rees and Main (2015) note that in Poland there was a national government initiative in recent years which included a strategy of improving sports infrastructure throughout the country. Poland was the country in the study with the highest reported levels of sports participation and also the second most positive ratings (after Norway) by children of local area facilities.

Within countries there was evidence of substantial gender and age variations in children's

leisure activities and many of these patterns were similar across contrasting countries.

In terms of gender, there were fairly consistent differences in terms of sports/exercising and reading with boys more frequently playing sports and exercising in all countries and girls generally more often reading for fun than boys in most countries. These findings are consistent with earlier studies (Larson and Verma 1999; Hallal et al. 2012). There was limited evidence of significant gender differences in television watching and this is also consistent with some other studies (e.g. the review by Braithwaite et al. 2013). Finally there was evidence of more frequent computer usage among boys than girls in some countries but not others, and this pattern was particularly pronounced in Germany and South Korea. Previous studies have produced inconsistent findings on gender differences with this aspect of leisure time.

Overall there is evidence of the gendered nature of children's leisure time, and hence children's daily lives, across all countries surveyed and it is interesting to note that there is no evidence of fewer gender variations in countries that are classified as having greater adult gender equality. For example, there were more pronounced gender differences in children's daily leisure activities in Germany – which is the least unequal of the 16 countries surveyed according to the UN Gender Inequality Index – than in Ethiopia or Nepal which are rated as having much greater inequality. This suggests that the forces shaping gender differences in children's daily lives may be different than those which shape adults' experiences of gender equality in particular countries.

The age variations observed in the Children's Worlds survey are consistent with previous studies that find there are age-related decreases in physical activity later in adolescence (Zuzanek 2005). This pattern went hand-in-hand with age-related increases in screen-based time in many high-income countries. On the other hand, in the two low-income countries in the survey, there was no increase in screen-based time with age but there was evidence that older children did more housework. Therefore there appear to be different patterns of time substitution as children grow older in countries with different levels of economic development. This broadly fits in with the pattern of increasing housework among children which also impacts on time for educational activities in poorer countries (Dornan and Woodhead 2015).

The analysis of material deprivation and local environmental factors supports the idea that children's leisure activities may be constrained and, to some extent determined, by material and structural factors. In most countries there was evidence of socio-economic inequalities with poorer children being less likely to frequently play sports and also to spend time watching television and using computers. While screen-based time may be associated with an increase in sedentary time, it is also a means of children learning and gaining information about the world, and the limited access to computers and the internet experienced by poorer children, in comparison with their richer peers, may for example reinforce educational inequalities. In general there is important evidence here about inequalities in children's access to information via the internet both within and between countries.

In addition to household economic factors, the nature of the local area in which children live also facilitates or hinders their participation in sports activities in particular. There is likely to be a link here between household poverty and poorer quality local environments. This hypothesis is borne out by the fact that in our survey there was a significant negative association between household material deprivation and facilities available in the local area and between household material deprivation and feelings of safety in the local area, in almost all countries in the survey. Thus inequalities in the quality and characteristics of local environments may exacerbate the effect of individual material deprivation on children's participation in outdoor physical activities.

Given the potential links between physical activity and health outcomes such as obesity, this evidence suggests that children's access to leisure opportunities may be one factor explaining socio-economic inequalities in child health within countries. Feeling unsafe in the local area

was another factor that appeared to inhibit sports participation and this suggests that efforts to increase neighbourhood safety could have a positive effect on children's physical activity levels and therefore also their physical health. These findings point to the possibility of increasing sports participation through initiatives to improve the local environment from children's perspectives.

An important contribution of the analysis presented in this chapter is the evidence of associations between children's leisure time and their subjective well-being. This is a topic that has received little previous attention in comparative studies about children. While there are concerns about the impact of children's screen based time on physical health (Braithwaite et al. 2013; Katzmarzyk et al. 2015), it does not appear that frequent television watching is associated with lower subjective well-being (in fact it was significantly associated with higher happiness and life satisfaction in a number of countries); and there is only very limited evidence of a negative link between frequent computer use and subjective well-being. This may reflect a limitation in the data in that it is not possible to distinguish between children who have moderate or high levels of screen-based time on most days of the week. Alternatively, this lack of a negative association between screen-based time and subjective well-being may also reflect the fact that, at moderate levels, screen time can have positive impacts (e.g. stress reduction as suggested by Zuzanek 2005) as well as negative ones.

The results of the analysis of the association between sports participation and subjective well-being are generally much stronger and less equivocal. Children who participated in sports and exercise most days had substantially higher positive affect, even after taking account of gender, age group and deprivation in all 16 countries. They also had higher life satisfaction in most countries. This is important new evidence of the potential benefits of sports participation for children's experienced quality of life in a very diverse sample of countries. It supports the idea of the well-being benefits of sports, in line with other findings on physical health.

There were similar findings about the positive link between frequent reading for pleasure and higher subjective well-being. Here there was a little more positive evidence for life satisfaction than for sports participation, and a little less evidence for a link with positive affect.

The additional findings on links between leisure activities and psychological aspects of well-being such as self-concept, freedom and relationships are broadly in line with some of the theoretical perspectives proposed regarding the link between leisure and subjective well-being – such as the mediating effect of the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Ryan and Deci 2000; Newman et al. 2014). This is a topic which could be explored more fully using more sophisticated analysis techniques such as structural equation modelling. It would also be informative to explore the extent to which these theories apply more specifically in individual countries.

While these findings support the idea of a positive impact of purposeful and active leisure activities on children's subjective well-being, it is important to note that, as this is cross-sectional data, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the direction of influences. A beneficial impact of sports and reading is certainly one possibility, but it is also plausible that children who are feeling happier or are more satisfied with their lives may be more likely to participate in sports or to read for pleasure. It is also possible that omitted variables may explain the associations.

On a more general level, some comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the Children's Worlds data set are warranted. The survey has considerable strengths in terms of the diversity of countries included, the nationally representative samples (of children in mainstream school) and the fact that findings are directly comparable between countries. On the other hand, it is important to recognise that the surveys only include children attending mainstream schools. Although school enrolment rates were relatively high in this age group across all participating countries, we do not have information about the lives of children not attending school. Additionally, in relation to the topic of time use, it is possible that the fact that the data asks about weekly fre-

quency rather than hours spent on an activity may limit the conclusions that can be drawn from it. However this is not certain. In a meta-analysis of the links between leisure and subjective well-being (primarily in samples of adults) Kuykendall et al. (2015) conclude that frequency and diversity measures may be more useful and appropriate than quantity measures (i.e. hours spent on an activity) when exploringt this particular association. Finally, information is also only available on a restricted number of leisure activities. Future research might usefully consider a wider range of activities.

While acknowledging these considerations, the Children's Worlds survey nevertheless provides some important comparative insights into the ways that children spend their leisure time in different countries, how this varies within countries and how it links with children's experienced quality of life. There are clear indications of inequalities in leisure activities both between and within countries; and there is important information about gender inequalities and age-related patterns in children's leisure time. These inequalities in children's leisure time and activities are indicative of different experiences of childhood between countries and between sub-groups of children within countries. In terms of practical implications, the findings on associations between structural (household and local area) factors and leisure activities, and between leisure activities and subjective well-being, suggest that actions to improve equality of access to a range of leisure activities could lead to enhancements in children's quality of life and experiences of childhood.

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# Recreation, Non-formal Education and Socialization as Factors Enhancing Well-Being. The Place of the *Madrich* in the Jewish Community

**4**

Denise Benatuil

## Abstract

Non-formal education and recreation hold a highly significant place within the Jewish community. These spaces are usually run by Madrichim—young people who can play an important role as non-formal educators.

Amadrich has the function of leading groups of children in non-formal education settings. This role has several highlights: first, it allows young people to remain identified with the community, since much of the training provided by non-formal education is the transmission of values, customs and Jewish traditions.

The fulfillment of this role as a leader and the practice of recreational activities lead to an increase in well-being in both groups. For young people, these activities help them to keep away from risky behavior during adolescence, and generate a higher level of responsibility and a greater identification with the values of Jewish culture and religion.

For children, these spaces result in increased well-being, as the groups led by the madrich,—which are based on recreation, non-formal education and physical activity carried out in communities, synagogues or community clubs on weekends,—provide a space for pleasure and identification.

Many studies have reviewed the importance of recreational activities for increasing well-being and Quality of Life (Campbell, Converse, Rodgers, 1976; Diener 2006; Diener et al. 1999; Michalos 2012). However, this presents a particular case, because the role of the madrich involves not only recreational activities, but also a prominent social position and the transmission of values and traditions of the Jewish religion.

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the association between recreation, non-formal education and socialization in the Jewish community, and the link between these three components and well-being.

The chapter first examines the concept of recreation and looks at the different recreation movements, with special emphasis on educational recreation. It also reviews studies that link recreation to well-being. This is followed by a discussion of non-formal education and the differences between non-formal and informal

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education, together with an analysis of the relationship between non-formal education and well-being. The chapter then explores socialization in the Jewish religion and the Jewish community, and addresses issues such as tradition, values and religion as they relate to the concepts of assimilation and diaspora. In addition, studies are reviewed that explore the link between religion and well-being.

The second part of the chapter discusses the specific role of the *Madrich* as a coordinator and leader with a share of responsibility in the socialization of the younger members of the community. In this connection, the *Hadracha* and Youth movements are analyzed as spaces articulating socialization, non-formal education, recreation and well-being.

## 4.2    Recreation

The concept of recreation comprises a host of activities, including social, educational, sporting and artistic pursuits. It is worth looking at the different definitions of recreation and the movements associated with it.

Any occupation can be considered to be recreational, as long as it is undertaken by choice during free time, with the aim of experiencing the pleasure derived from the activity itself and finding in it intimate satisfaction and an opportunity for recreation (Medeiros 1969).

Recreation refers to an activity or a set of activities pursued by an individual during time he or she does not allot to external obligations. It involves a break from habitual or everyday activities. Recreational activities are a matter of choice and cause feelings of pleasure, fun, entertainment and joy (Waichman 2000). Recreation has also been defined as an engagement in pleasant or enjoyable activities or experiences, which are socially acceptable and usually undertaken during leisure time (whether on an individual or group basis), and in which the participant becomes voluntarily involved (intrinsic motivation) with free and natural attitudes. Recreational activities produce immediate satisfaction and allow the individual to express his or her sponta-

neity and originality. They can also be understood as a specific form, an expression of the inner nature of the human being, a stage of education and an outlet for creative needs (Reina 2011). Recreation comprises and designates free-time practices related to public enjoyment, joy and pleasure (Gerlero 2011).

Recreation can take a variety of forms, including physical pursuits (games, sports and other physical activities), artistic ones (music, singing, plastic arts, the theater and dancing), intellectual recreation (reading, intellectual and board games), outdoor activities (camping, hiking and mountain climbing), pastimes (collecting objects), social recreation (parties, banquets, meetings), tourism (whether domestic or international, alone or group trips), educational activities (classes, workshops, talks, lectures) and spiritual ones (praying, attending a religious service or mass, celebrating religious festivities, admiring nature) (Salazar Salas 2012).

Recreation has seen the emergence of different movements associated with it.

The recreation movement—of which Joseph Lee is considered to be the founder—is the expression of a technified society that is concerned with obtaining amusement and spending leisure time in a socially satisfying manner. Leisure is considered to have a therapeutic value, restore physical balance and foster participation in groups. This movement conceives recreation as a set of activities that provide fun. It generally comprises structured activities guided by practitioners that have been trained in physical education. The professional quality of the practitioners is measured by experience and technical resources, and the activities are based on empirical principles. Schedules are usually used where the main variable is time availability (Waichman 2000).

Another movement is sociocultural animation, which was formed in the 1950s under the influence of J. Dumazedier. The movement was originated by sociologists interested in social participation and popular education that might help individuals to transform their own environment. Sociocultural animation has been widely employed in the areas of adult education and

permanent or continuous education, and presents more progressive, democratic and humanistic features than the recreation movement (Waichman 2009). It includes a set of cultural, aesthetic, sporting and social practices undertaken in clubs, youth and children's homes, social centers, holiday camps, social tourism, outings and outdoor excursions, and handicrafts, to name a few (Besnard 1991). Its practitioners—called animators—use different teaching techniques and rules for different audiences, depending on age, sex, environment, culture and occupation. Animators may be professionals or volunteers, and their tasks are related to the appearance, modification and/or awareness-raising of the social values adopted by each institution.

A third movement is that of educational recreation, which has become particularly influential in the field of non-formal education, beginning in early out-of-school childhood education. Its practitioners promote permanent education and recreation as a model of education, which can help to overcome the limitations of the formal system (Waichman 2009). Educational recreation can be defined as an experience-based model of education in leisure, premised on educational situations and experiences related to free time (Cuenca 2004). The focus of attention is placed on the recreational experience as a facilitator of educational processes, fostering at the same time non-directive education and self-management. The educational recreation approach is based on group work with a focus on individual objectives (Waichman 1998, 2000). Thus, it relies on the participants' interest and motivation and provides personalized lifelong learning. Among its downsides, the learning process is slow and it demands a special commitment from the educators or guides, who are not always sufficiently qualified. In addition, taking account of the learner's freedom makes planning difficult (Lema 2011). This approach has been implemented in both formal institutions, by means of extracurricular activities, and in non-formal settings, such as youth associations (Cuenca 2004).

To conclude, the recreation movement was formed and developed around physical education, while animation was originated by sociologists studying leisure. The educational recreation approach has been implemented by educators in both formal and non-formal settings, such as summer camps and children's clubs (Waichman 1998).

Finally, a distinction should be drawn between recreation and leisure. Leisure involves entertainment-related activities that are usually practiced at random and on an individual basis. Recreation, on the other hand, comprises organized and directed activities.

Leisure and recreation are defined by pleasure, but leisure is connected with specific passive activities, while recreation is often linked to sports and active pursuits (Mobily 1989). In a study carried out with adolescents, the definition of leisure was associated with relaxation and free time, and with opportunities for relaxed enjoyment, with scarce emphasis on action and the pursuit of challenges (Kleiber et al. 1993). This chapter will focus on the concept of recreation and the educational recreation movement.

## 4.3 Well-Being

The concept of well-being can be traced to a philosophy dating back many centuries. However, it was only in the late 1980s that Diener approached the from a scientific prospective. Later on, with the advent of positive psychology and Seligman's developments, the scientific community reignited its interest for concepts like happiness, well-being, optimism and wisdom. From then on, the concept of well-being has gained impetus within the scientific community.

Even though there is no consensual definition, Diener's proposal is more readily utilized. Subjective well-being is defined as the global judgement of one's life with a high level of positive affect and a low level of negative affect (Diener 2000).

Within the field of well-being, two traditions have been developed and coexist, namely Hedonic and Eudaimonic well-being (Keyes et al. 2002).

The hedonic tradition is characterized by the subjective study of well-being, which analyzes

why and how people experience their lives in a positive way. This includes affective reactions such as pleasure and pain, as well as cognitive judgment, interest, boredom, enjoyment and sadness. This tradition is linked to the concept of happiness (Lyubomirsky 2008). It comprises judgments and comparisons that people make of their own ideals and their aspirations, with other people, and with their own past. It can be presented as a global balance that individuals make of their life opportunities, the course of events affecting their lives, and the consequences of their emotional experiences (Blanco and Díaz 2005) Eudaimonic well-being, on the other hand, is based on the development of human potential, the style and manner in which we confront human challenges, and the strength and eagerness to achieve relevant goals (Ryan and Deci 2001). This includes the assessment that individuals make of their role in society. Ryff (1989) proposes six dimensions of Eudaimonic well-being: self-acceptance, positive interpersonal relations, environmental domain, autonomy or self-determination, the meaning of life, and personal growth (Ryff and Keyes 1995). These traditions have given rise to different developments and applications in the realm of education, work, clinical and social psychology.

Well-being has also been explored in relation to social and community interaction, as a dynamic state that is reinforced when people can meet their individual objectives or find their link to social interaction (Statham and Chase 2010). Well-being is connected to culture and society, and the values of each cultural context (Diener 2009).

Well-being is today considered as a complex and ample construct that needs to be analyzed from a multicultural and multidisciplinary approach. It includes the opportunities offered by the community and society to promote each individual's objectives. In the past few years, positive psychology has yielded significant concepts associated with well-being, such as happiness, positive emotions, meaningful life, resilience, and flow, among others.

Flow can be defined as an optimal experience that occurs when a person is able and motivated to undertake an activity, and feels challenged by the task, while losing the notion of time as he or she is fully involved and utilizes all of his or her potential to achieve a goal. The individual makes his or her best effort to complete the task, without conscious awareness of what this effort entails. The satisfaction is not in the result, but in the process (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2014). Flow allows understanding intrinsically motivated activities, based on the premise of having fun, enjoyment and pleasure in relatively simple pursuits. Any activity can generate flow and this has been analyzed in areas such as sports, arts, education, and work (Salanova et al. 2005).

### 4.3.1 Recreation and Well-Being

The relationship between well-being and recreation has been extensively researched. Recreational activities, which are practiced for the sake of enjoyment and satisfaction and are intrinsically motivated, are by definition associated with positive emotions (Reina 2011; Waichman 1998).

The degree of association between well-being and recreation was assessed by Campbell et al. (1976) in a survey conducted among the American population. According to such survey, recreation is one of the factors with the strongest influence on well-being.

Other studies were also conducted in which the relationship between recreation and well-being was explored. Stock et al. (1983) found that some recreational activities accounted for 2% of the variance in well-being. In addition, there are many other studies linking leisure activities to quality of life and well-being (Hoopes and Lounsbury 1989; Michalos 1993; Weiss and Friedrichs 1986).

Along the same lines, research studies have examined the relationship between leisure activities and cultural variables, particularly among migrant populations. Increased levels of self-reported participation in leisure activities that are culturally agreed upon as more significant for a good leisure life are more strongly connected

with leisure satisfaction. Leisure satisfaction is a strong predictor of life satisfaction and self-rated health (Chick et al. 2016).

The studies that link well-being to recreation are predominantly focused on the association between recreation and active pursuits such as tourism, sports and other free-time activities. Some research has also identified an association with nature-based recreation, which includes activities in green, blue, and white (in the wintertime) spaces. In this respect, a study found a link between self-reported participation in nature-based recreation and perceived, recent emotional well-being (Korpela et al. 2014).

Other studies have considered extracurricular activities, organized, directed and managed by coordinators or professionals in NGOs or other organizations. These activities are closely related to the concept of educational recreation discussed above. Several studies conducted among adolescents have explored the association between participation in structured and non-structured extracurricular activities and risky behavior. These studies found that adolescents that take part in structured extracurricular activities are less prone to engage in antisocial behavior, more likely to achieve a higher level of academic performance, and to have positive psychosocial functioning (Bartko and Eccles 2003; Mahoney and Stattin 2000). Other studies found that young people that took part in different community activities directed by highly skilled adults reported significantly lower rates of aggression and antisocial behavior (Mahoney 2000). Involvement in organized youth programs provides young people with a large number of developmental benefits, such as social skills (Mahoney et al. 2003).

## 4.4 Non-formal Education

The term non-formal education was widely used in the 1970s and 1980s. It almost disappeared in the 1990s and has now attracted renewed interest (Rogers 2007). Jarvys defines non-formal education as any form of systematic learning carried out outside a formal organization (Jarvis 2001).

However, such definition does not shed light on the distinction between non-formal and informal education.

Informal learning is learning acquired in a spontaneous manner, without a figure of authority or a mediator. It is a type of learning that involves a certain degree of spontaneity and an intrinsic motivation. Informal learning occurs, for example, when a person is reading, viewing, or listening to something (Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson 1995; Maarschalk 1988).

Studies usually use both terms interchangeably and only make a distinction between formal and in-school education. Therefore, it is important to establish the differences between both types of education.

Eshach 2007 develops a clear and precise classification of both terms.

| Non-formal | Informal |
|---|---|
| At institution out of school | Everywhere |
| Usually supportive | Supportive |
| Structured | Unstructured |
| Usually prearranged | Spontaneous |
| Motivation may be extrinsic but it is typically more intrinsic | Motivation is mainly intrinsic |
| Usually voluntary | Voluntary |
| May be guided or teacher-led | Usually learner-led |
| Learning is usually not evaluated | Learning is not evaluated |
| Non-sequential | Non-sequential |

The type of learning discussed in this chapter falls within the definition of non-formal education.

### 4.4.1 Non-formal Education and Well-Being

Csikszentmihalyi has been one of the pioneers in studying the association between non-formal education and well-being. He was the first one to use the term autotelic, meaning "having a purpose in and not apart from itself" (Merriam-Webster). Drawing on his analysis of museum visits as instances of non-formal learning, the author argues that autotelic people are internally driven and curious. He also poses that there are many activities that may be intrinsically motivating,

such as listening to music, dancing and sport. Free-choice learning can also be an autotelic experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

Certain types of learning can be intrinsically motivating. Packer (2006) refers to such experiences as *learning for fun* and discusses the phenomenon in which people engage in a learning experience because of the value and enjoyment they attach to the learning process, rather than for any instrumental motives, such as the achievement of a specific learning result.

Packer (2006) argues that learning for fun involves a series of actions such as discovery, exploration, mental stimulation and excitement. Such experiences are potentially transformative, as they can change an individual's life, alter his or her worldview and enhance his or her personal capabilities (Pine and Gilmore 1999).

This kind of learning can create flow, understood as the sensation of being fully involved in an activity, to the point that time, fatigue and everything else is forgotten, except for the activity itself (Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde 1993). Csikszentmihalyi analyses a museum visit as a non-formal learning experience in which people are likely to experience flow, when they are interested, engaged, involved and open to discovery (Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson 1995).

Such experiences can also take place in other non-formal learning settings and can be regarded as situations that enhance well-being as they create flow and increase intrinsic motivation.

## 4.5    Socialization in the Jewish Community

The socialization of the new generations is one of the greatest challenges confronting religious groups in Western societies, in which the religious and non-religious reference systems compete to shape and give meaning to people's life (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

For many years, extensive analysis has been carried out and strategies have been designed to promote socialization and the development of a Jewish identity in the new generations. This issue has been particularly relevant in the case of the

Jewish community of the diaspora, composed by all the individuals belonging to the Jewish community and living outside the State of Israel. In this connection, a large number of studies have been conducted among the American population (Cohen and Bar-Shalom 2006; Hartman and Sheskin 2013; Rebhun 2015, 2016 among others) and a lesser number among Jewish communities residing elsewhere.

Such studies have historically focused on the struggle against assimilation. This has been a recurring concern in the past few years, particularly with respect to young people (Reimer 2007). The fact that many Jewish individuals live in countries where Catholicism—or even secular culture—is the majority religious culture has led to the adoption of different strategies and actions to promote socialization in the Jewish community.

Against this background, Jewish education has been critical in ensuring the continuity of the group and preventing assimilation (Reimer 2007; Staropolsky 2007). However, the studies show an imbalance between the expectations placed on Jewish education (particularly, formal education) and its real impact on the subsequent identification with Judaism (Chazan 2003; Cohen and Schmida 1997; Dashefsky 1992; Reimer 2007). Those that live in the diaspora are constantly assessing and analyzing different actions in order to promote socialization and maintain the Jewish identity of the new generations.

Socialization in religion operates at two different levels: through the transmission of key contents that give a meaning to Judaism (religious, historical, political, linguistic issues and issues related to the values and tradition of the Jewish people), and through the transmission of the feeling of belonging in a group, which creates a commitment to the community. Thus understood, socialization fosters the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and tools for individuals to become active members of the community (Reimer 2007).

This twofold transmission (of Jewish contents and feelings) is achieved through formal education (Jewish community schools), non-formal education (youth movements, preparation for the

*Bar/Bat Mitzvá*, trips to Israel, adult education, among others) and informal education (in Jewish households). At all levels, Jewish education has always been regarded as the basic tool to ensure the continuity of the community. However, the successful formation of Jewish identity is based on a series of cumulative factors, which include Jewish family connections, Jewish formal education, Jewish friends and social networks, Jewish informal education, and travel programs (Fishman et al. 2012).

It is worth highlighting that the components of Jewish socialization and their degree of influence vary throughout the life cycle. Research has found that adolescence is a crucial stage in terms of predicting adult Jewish connections. In addition, statistical studies show that for every year passed, the bar mitzvah year "counts" more than the previous year. It has been found that receiving formal Jewish education from age 16 to 17 is a more accurate predictor of adult Jewish connectedness than receiving such education from age 15 to 16. Quantitative and qualitative studies suggest that having mostly Jewish friends in high school encourages individuals to continue formal and informal Jewish education and predicts a choice of Jewish marriage partners (Fishman et al. 2012).

The approach to assimilation has undergone major changes in the past few years. The prevailing approach to Jewish identity has been largely influenced by a "survivalist" conception that revolves around threats of assimilation and intermarriage, instead of focusing on new realities that flow from modernity and that have given rise to the emergence of new ways of being Jewish. In recent years, research has veered away from a static perspective toward a more dynamic and complex one, which includes a multiplicity of disciplines and conceives identities as multiple and shifting processes practiced and rehearsed by individuals, instead of a conception of identity as some "thing" that someone "has" (Charmé et al. 2008; Charmé and Zelkowicz 2011). This shift in approach may be explained by the passage of time, as the Jewish people living in the diaspora are now in their second or third generation—research in certain countries even makes reference to veteran religious minorities (Rebhun 2016). In addition, the concept of the diaspora has been called into question in recent years. In its stead, there are propositions for the construction of a new concept of homeland and identity based on a multiplicity of choices, such as returning to the State of Israel or remaining in the country of birth of one's parents and grandparents, or establishing roots in the country where one was born and currently resides.

Some controversial arguments have also been put forward recently, such as those of Aviv and Shneer (2005), who argue that Jews have come to the end of their diaspora. No longer wanderers, today's Jews are settled. They are now at home, whether it be in Buenos Aires, Los Angeles or Berlin, and are rooted within communities of their own choosing. This conception is based on the existence of vibrant, dynamic Jewish communities around the world, in which Jewish identity has become more flexible and inclusive.

### 4.5.1 Religion, Jewish Socialization and Well-Being

The relationship between religiosity and well-being has been extensively studied. Many researchers have explored the association between religion and well-being and between religion and positive psychology. It is important at this point to define and draw a distinction between religion and spirituality. Spirituality can be explicit in the form of a religion, or it can also take the form of an inner attitude toward God, the divine or higher reasons. Spirituality is an inner attitude, as opposed to religiosity, which depends on institutions and/or practices (Rowold 2011). Spirituality can be defined as a collection of feelings that lead individuals to connect with themselves, with others and with the purpose of life, in search of meaning and sense (Mytko and Knight 1999).

Religiosity and spirituality help to find meaning to life and are a source of understanding (Rodríguez Fernández 2011). Finding the meaning of life can affect mental stability, and it is associated with minor psychopathological

changes such as anxiety and depression, stress and psychological upheavals, or abuse of drugs and alcohol (Frankl 1999; Yalom 1984; Zika and Chamberlain 1992). Religiosity may help find more profound meanings of reality, reorganizing values to differentiate what is important and what is not, favoring positive and constructive attitudes in life. Religious people frequently find greater social support. Being part of a religious community and/or participating in shared religious or ritual practices facilitates these personal encounters (Ferrell et al. 2003; Holland et al. 1998).

In addition, the relationship between religion and well-being is based on the notion that religion fosters psychological growth, self-realization and enlightenment with risk-taking peers. Eccles and Barber (1999) found that taking part in religious activities had the largest influence on positive youth development and decreased engagement in risky behavior or association. The relationship between religion and positive social attitudes, such as tolerance toward others, has also been explored (Tsang and McCullough 2003). A classic meta-analytic study based on 28 American studies that assessed the relationship between both variables found a slight influence in the development of well-being. Religion accounted for between 2% and 6% of the variance. It was also concluded that the relationship is stronger for older people than for young people and for those who are actively engaged in religion (church attendance, community membership) and have religious feelings. The studies report that religion has a lesser influence than health, income, work status, loneliness, neuroticism, and work and family satisfaction, but a stronger influence than age, gender and race (Michalos 1993; Witter et al. 1985).

Different studies have found that religiosity and well-being have a moderately positive correlation among persons with religious beliefs and religious faith, as they report higher levels of life satisfaction and well-being, and decreased negative effects on stressful life events (Chamberlain and Zika 1988; Clark and Lelkes 2005; Dufton and Perlman 1986; Ellison 1991).

Another important study, which was based on a Gallup poll of 1.3 million Americans, found that religious attendance is connected with subjective well-being. This outcome was valid for the religions considered. Stronger associations were found among more religious individuals, among those considering religion an important part of their lives and among frequent church attenders (Lim 2015).

Research was likewise conducted with a sample of Jewish Israeli students, which was divided into three subsamples: religious identity subsample, traditional identity subsample, and secular identity subsample. Path analyses found that religious belief is positively related to psychosocial well-being and negatively related to psychological distress only for the religious and secular identity subsamples (Vilchinsky and Kravetz 2005).

While many studies identified positive correlations between well-being and religiosity, the reasons for such correlations have only begun to be studied in the past few years. With respect to the influence of the socio-demographic variables on this relationship, it was found that in those societies having more favorable circumstances, religiosity is less prevalent and the difference in well-being between religious and non-religious people is significantly smaller (Diener et al. 2011).

The impact of social variables on this relationship has also been examined. Research found the existence of a person–culture fit effect, according to which religious people experienced increased well-being in religious nations but not in non-religious ones. This suggests that the benefits of religion for social relationships and well-being are dependent on the characteristics of the relevant society (Diener et al. 2011).

Studies addressing the impact of personal variables have found that religion has a significant role in providing psychological support for people who are facing health shocks, aging, and adverse and difficult circumstances (Graham and Crown 2014). Other variables having an impact on this relationship are social support, feeling respected, and purpose or meaning in life (Diener et al. 2011). It has also been found that the association between religiosity and well-being is stronger among people with a lower level of

agency. This is probably due to the fact that individuals that have a higher level of agency to decide the course of their lives give religion a less important role in the overall assessment of their lives (Graham and Crown 2014).

A large number of studies have explored the different dimensions of religion, such as the social, religious, and spiritual dimensions. The social dimension of religion proves to be most important for the least social respondents, while the religiosity component of religion is most important for the happiest respondents, irrespective of religious affiliation or service attendance. Thus, it seems that the happiest are most likely to seek social purpose in religion; the poorest are most likely to seek social support in religion (Graham and Crown 2014). As to the relationship between spirituality and well-being, the eudaimonic or intrinsic component of religion has proved more significant than the hedonic component. High levels of spiritual or religious meaningfulness enhance well-being (DelleFave et al. 2013).

## 4.6   Non-formal Education and Recreation as Socialization Mechanisms in the Jewish Community

As discussed above, non-formal education can favor socialization and strengthen Jewish identity. During adolescence, between the ages of 14 and 18 approximately, the socialization environments relate to Jewish education in formal settings (day schools and supplementary schools), youth movement organizations and Jewish or summer camps. In addition, in certain countries, it is common for young people between 17 and 19 to participate in programs that involve a trip to Israel. This trip may last from 10 days to a semester and it mainly involves recreational activities (social activities and tourism) or participation in formal education settings (Fishman et al. 2012).

While non-formal education may take different forms, we will focus here on recreational activities in Jewish Community Centers (JCC). Jewish Community Centers may be defined as multipurpose institutions that provide a variety of recreational, cultural, social, athletic, as well as Jewish and general educational activities for a broad cross-section of the Jewish community (Chazan 2002). They may operate in different settings, such as buildings or clubs.

Recreational activities in JCCs, even if diverse, have some common features. They generally take place on Saturdays and/or Sundays and take approximately from 2 to 6 h. These activities are conducted by the *Madrich* (a concept that will be examined in the following section), groups may vary in size—the number usually ranges between 10 and 40 children—and the ages vary between 3 and 16 years.

Although there is no distinctive term to refer to these groups of young people, for exposition purposes we will refer to them as youth movements (YM). Through Jewish youth movements and organizations, young Jews voluntarily take part in cultural, educational, ideological and social activities within a peer group context. The power of the peer group and culture is the most important force within youth movements and organizations. Most young people enjoy sharing and "hanging out" with friends in their youth groups (Chazan 2002).

Youth movements involve out-of-school spaces organized by an ideological Jewish movement (Chazan 1991). It is worth mentioning that the contents of and the ideology behind YMs vary among countries. For example, in the United States and some European countries, they work with contents and principles that are mainly religious or Zionist. In Latin America, YMs have a community character based on Jewish customs, traditions and values.

Activities require previous planning of the issues on which the group will work and the dynamics that will be used. The issues addressed in YMs generally reflect young people's interests. The activities are centered on the transmission of Jewish identity, values and traditions, but can be clearly distinguished from formal education. Young people who participate weekly in a YM tend to do so with great excitement and intrinsic motivation. YMs are spaces for fun and socialization where the participants establish bonds with friends that are even stronger than those

developed at school or in the neighborhood—"movement" or "club" friends usually build strong bonds that tend to remain through adulthood. Activities are conducted on a weekly basis, every Saturday and, sometimes, Saturdays and Sundays. In addition, camps (which are variously known as Majanoth, summer camps or Jewish camps) are organized once or twice a year and they last approximately from 2 to 15 days depending on the age of the participants. Sharing moments and life experiences with YM friends, becoming involved in weekly activities, summer camps and special activities (outings, night activities, activities that involve helping vulnerable groups, etc.) promote strong enthusiasm, a sense of belonging, pleasure and amusement. Giving meaning to young Jewish people's lives should be the main goal of the community center (Shabi and Ansari 2001).

Research has found that between the ages of 14 and 19, Jewish friends and social networks have an influence on decisions to attend a Jewish school and take part in Jewish educational programs. This new understanding of the power of social networks suggests that the direction of influence during adolescence ranges from friendships to education to family involvements. This allows concluding that a strong Jewish social network during this stage of the life cycle can accurately predict choices of college friends and Jewish marriage partners (Fishman et al. 2012).

These life experiences in YMs and Jewish camps favor socialization in Judaism through non-formal education and recreation. Experience in education makes reference to learning that occurs through participation in events or through other forms of direct action or direct observation or hearing (Chazan 2002). This process takes place when participants actively experience a large number of life events and moments, feelings and values, specific to Jewish identity. The participants enjoy attending meetings every week, going away for weekends, and spending summers with friends and colleagues from the "movement" or the "club". The very experience of taking part in these youth movement activities carries an aura of enthusiasm and fun (Chazan 2002). These spaces generate a certain "feeling" that cannot be achieved through the transmission of contents in formal education. This form of socialization is based on the transmission of values, experiences and feelings in a dynamic and flexible way, and promotes pleasant feelings, unforgettable experiences and opportunities for experiencing Judaism in its full creative potential (Reimer 2007).

Another setting with similar characteristics is that of Jewish camps. They provide an environment for Jewish education where participants spend time with their peers in different types of activities, including education, sports, recreation, social pastimes, and Jewish living. Camps help to effectively develop a sense of "togetherness" and group loyalty. The bunk or camp as a whole often becomes a close community that is united by shared songs, experiences, activities, and memories (Chazan 2002).

For many young Jewish people who are not educated in formal Jewish settings, YMs and Jewish camps constitute spaces for socialization, as well as settings for the transmission of traditions and family customs.

## 4.7 The Coordinator: The *Madrich*

The term "Madrich" comes from "derech" (path): a *Madrich* is someone who leads and signals the way, but also someone who walks with those he leads. A *Madrich* is someone who is close but who is not a peer, someone who knows the way because he has gone through it before. The *Madrich* leads, guides, show the way and counsels.

The role of *Madrich* is assigned to young leaders that are in charge of the YMs. They excite and inspire the younger participants, and there is usually a great sense of identification with them since they are charismatic and engaging counsellors who are also close in age. They are youth workers and readily available advisors.

These young counsellors need training in order to be able to lead groups. In Argentina and many Latin-American countries, training courses for leaders last for 2 years and are offered by youth departments within Jewish community institutions, such as clubs, synagogues and JCCs. These courses are delivered by experienced leaders and specialized trainers and, during those 2 years, trainees work on subjects such as evolutionary psychology, learning, communication, contents, Jewish traditions and values, etc. All leaders receive training and preparation in courses for at least 2 years before they can start their work.

This learning process is designed for young people between 15 and 17 years of age and it is also based on non-formal and experience-driven learning. Sometimes the course ends with a camping event or a trip to Israel.

After the course, the *Madrichim* can start working in the coordination of groups of children or pre-adolescents, whose ages may range between 2 and 14 years. For these coordination responsibilities, they usually work in pairs and they are put in charge of a specific group during a whole year.

## 4.8   The *Hadracha*

The noun "*Hadracha*" comes from the word "derech" and means "training", "leadership", "guidance". It refers to the leading role of the *Madrich*. It encompasses the whole process from the beginning of the training course to the subsequent group-leading work and the leadership of other *Madrichim—rosh* (head) *Madrich.*

Young people start this process with the course approximately at the age of 15 and they work in group coordination approximately until the age of 20 or 22. A few of them continue with the coordination or supervision of other *Madrichim*. During this process, the participants attend the Community institution once or twice a week during the training course and then two or three times a week to coordinate the group during the

week and at least once a week to meet with other *Madrichim* to plan, supervise planning, organize joint activities and receive further training.

Generally, there is planning of annual contents and contents related to festivities and celebrations, as well as contents specific to each group according to the changes they might be experiencing at a given time. The *Madrichim* are responsible for a weekly planning in which the content is presented and the means to work that content is explained. Such planning is always based on recreation and non-formal education and it is supervised by the coordinator. It is also the coordinators, together with the *Rosh Madrij*, who decide on the *Madrichim* partners that will be in charge of coordinating each group during that year.

Each week's planning presents a central topic that serves as a guide to the activity: this may be a value, such as solidarity, helping others, respect, etc.; some content related to religion such as the meaning of a specific festivity or relevant date; or content related to tradition, such as food or rituals specific to certain festivity, among others.

It is worth noting that in most Latin-American countries, *Hadracha* activities take place in Jewish community institutions, which may sometimes not be religious spaces. Activities may be conducted in a club, a federation or association of communities, or in a synagogue's youth department, but even in those cases values and traditions are transmitted for the purpose of favoring socialization among the younger members of the Jewish community and building their Jewish identity. However, it is worthy of note that, at least in Latin America, these spaces do not have a religious purpose or a Zionist goal (actions in favor of the Jewish diaspora's return to Israel).

*Hadracha* activities include recreation, entertainment, Jewish education and transmission of Jewish culture and values. These activities transmit and reflect values, ideals and ideologies specific to Judaism. The young *Madrichim* consider the *Hadracha* a very significant space and ascribe to it different meanings, as will be discussed below.

## 4.9 The *Hadracha* as a Space for Socialization, Non-formal Education, Recreation and Well-Being

As stated above, the *Hadracha* is one of the privileged spaces for strengthening young people's identification with tradition, roots and Judaism.

The *Hadracha* takes places at a time of an individual's life cycle that is of great relevance for the development and maintenance of Jewish identity (Fishman et al. 2012). The *Madrich* leads his group through a path he already knows and through which he has already travelled. Revisiting that path reinforces the sense of belonging in the Jewish community—the *Madrich* lives once again experiences, family memories and marks left by the experiences he went through as a *Chanich* (a child or adolescent that participates in the YMs). The possibility of revisiting those experiences, transmitting them to others, and the socialization of the *Chanich* into Judaism strengthens the identification of the *Madrich* and reinforces his own socialization and sense of belonging in the Jewish community.

The *Hadracha* articulates socialization, non-formal education and educational recreation. This type of experience-driven education that takes place outside the school setting is conducted by leaders and it is based on intrinsic motivation. This instance of non-formal education is premised on an educational recreation approach, which considers recreation as a form of personal development that in many cases fills the gaps left by formal Jewish education or supplements the limitations of the formal system, as it works more comprehensively on identification, life events and experiences. The contents leave a mark; the activities undertaken at YMs or Jewish camps tend to be remembered more intensely than school experiences.

Within the model of educational recreation, the *Madrich's* intervention as a recreational leader is aimed at promoting development processes that favor learning and satisfy as many needs within the community as possible. All these elements are considered to be essential for human development. The *Madrich* creates projects

based on specific interests, motivations and attitudes; he implements educational activities that promote learning in a way that is proper for the community, thus promoting full development (Lema 2011). This model encourages the participants to actively engage in their own reality, and generates opportunities for participation in institutional processes. It also promotes spaces for social cooperation around common interests and objectives (Lema 2011).

During the *Hadracha*, young people aged 17 and 18 lead groups of children and pre-adolescents in the communities, JCCs or clubs. They plan and carry out recreational activities based on non-formal education principles aimed at favoring and strengthening identification and socialization of children in Judaism. This requires organization, planning and preparation, and involves a special commitment to the role and its responsibilities.

During the whole *Hadracha* process, which usually lasts for approximately 5 years, well-being plays a central role. This role is explored in detail in the following paragraphs.

As discussed above, well-being is a construct made up of three components: life satisfaction, the presence of positive emotions and the absence of negative ones (Ryan and Deci 2001). People experience subjective well-being (SWB) when they feel more pleasant than unpleasant emotions, and when they are engaged in challenging activities (Diener 2000).Positive affect and negative affect have been closely related to adolescents' personal functioning and outcomes (Fiedler and Beier 2014; Lewis et al. 2009). In the following paragraphs, we will analyze how these three concepts are linked to the *Madrich's* role during *Hadracha*.

Life satisfaction is based on the global judgement of one's life and one's domains of life (Diener 2000). The role the *Madrich* plays in the community can enhance life satisfaction in many areas of young people's lives. The *Hadracha* becomes a space of belonging for the participants, mainly due to their relationship with the JCC or club and the strong bonds they form with their peers (*Madrichim*). It becomes a place of social reference. Thus, social identity is enhanced

by "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (Tajfel 1972, p. 292).This kind of intergroup relations usually fosters positive social identity (Hogg 2001; Turner 1975).

Jewish identity is thus strengthened in the young participants, who usually build solid and long-lasting relationships with their peers. They become leading trainers committed to Jewish values and their transmission.

Another feature of the *Hadracha* is that it usually constitutes the first work-related experience, which marks the passage into the formal adult world. It is the first employment experience since it requires commitment and responsibility in leading groups of children and pre-adolescents and produces a great sense of achievement when the work is successfully completed. It may be concluded that this first connection with formal work generates satisfaction in the young participants as they feel they are taking on responsibilities by performing an adult role and by creating a space for self-development outside the family environment. As a work space, it involves responsibilities and commitments, and it requires organization and efficient management of time. Based on its particular features and the fact that it represents a transition to a more formal space, this first work experience may be expected to cause satisfaction in the participants, as they acquire greater autonomy and experience the passage into the work environment of the adult world.

Furthermore, the feeling of satisfaction is reinforced by the acknowledgement and recognition of the *Madrich's* role by the children who are in his charge, their parents and the coordinators. Such acknowledgement and recognition, as well as the satisfaction derived from the completion of the work, lead to feelings of self-confidence and assurance.

With respect to the second component of well-being, that of positive emotions, an analysis of the *Madrich's* role allows concluding that during adolescence—which is a moment of change and search for one's identity—the *Hadracha* represents a space where young people may find support, reference, security and identity. The *Madrichim* become the children's referents, and their work is valued and respected by both the children and their parents. They are given an important role within the community, JCC or club as well as in the Jewish community as a whole. This acknowledgement and social recognition may prove to be crucial at this stage of the life cycle. The *Madrich* plays an important social role in the community—he is in charge of the socialization of children into Judaism; he is a model, a guide, a referent for children and, as such, he needs to present himself before the parents as a responsible person fit to guide their children. For young people aged 17 and 18, this represents a great responsibility. Therefore, the performance of this role generates positive emotions and satisfaction, and results in enhanced self-esteem.

Along the same lines, the *Hadracha* generates commitment and involvement. All the activities planned take into account dynamics that favor integration and well-being, and by working on specific Jewish values such as solidarity and helping others, these activities increase the young participants' commitment to the group, the community they belong to and society as a whole. Commitment to social causes and the specific ways in which such causes are addressed make the work itself become fun, exciting, enjoyable and intrinsically motivating. In all likelihood, these activities become enjoyable due to the importance of the experience of autonomy, challenge, and relatedness to others. The state of enjoyment or flow is generated by people's continuing engagement in challenges that they can master. Personal and collective connection to the cause of fighting injustice makes challenges personally meaningful (Deci and Ryan 2000; Pearce and Larson 2006).In addition, perceived competence and the sense of achievement contribute to intrinsic motivation (Caldwell and Witt 2011). The *Hadracha* thus becomes an intrinsically motivated activity and generates emotions such as fun, enjoyment and joy. If we consider this an activity that generates flow, then it becomes relevant in the development of well-being. Given their characteristics, the activities involved in the *Hadracha* favor the development of Eudamonic

well-being, through the increase of self-appraisal and feeling well with oneself. The development of positive interpersonal relationships and the connectedness with others generate improvements in the young people's sense of self when they feel that they add relevant value to their social roles, and have a social identity within the community. In addition, the *Hadracha* strengthens personal growth through progressive personal development. (Ryff 1989; Ryff and Keyes 1995).

With respect to the role of negative emotions, the *Hadracha* favors the development of a peer group (with other *Madrichim* who share weekend activities and coordination meetings). This group usually becomes a support group and strong bonds are built among peers. The knowledge that a *Madrich* is valued and respected, and that every Saturday and Sunday a group of children looks forward to meeting him and sharing the activities he proposes creates a setting where most participants find support and a sense of belonging.

On the other hand, the role of the *Madrich* implies a commitment to weekly planning and implementation of the activities during the weekend. The young people who decide to undertake this role have to add to their school responsibilities time to plan, meet with coordinators in order to supervise activities, sometimes contact parents on the phone during the week and implement the activities during Saturdays and/or Sundays. This requires them to manage time more efficiently and take on responsibilities that other young people aged 17 and 18 do not usually have. In many cases, the elements mentioned—the feeling of support and belonging, the undertaking of commitments, the need for organization and the performance of functions in a responsible manner—decrease engagement in risky behavior that is particularly common at this stage of the life cycle. Many studies show that there is a negative correlation between well-being and adolescent maladaptive outcomes such as hopelessness and problem behaviors, including delinquency, substance abuse, and problematic Internet use (Shek and Li 2016; Sun and Shek 2012, 2013). Many adolescents undertake leisure activities during out-of-school-time programs, such as

scouting and recreation programs. Adolescents that do not take part in this kind of programs can fill their free time in unhealthy or unproductive ways, such as being involved in vandalism or using alcohol or other drugs. Adolescents usually engage in this type of activities when they perceive they are bored in their free time and have nothing else to do (Caldwell and Witt 2011).

In addition, a *Madrich* is an adolescent, and he thus performs his role at a time of change and significant growth, of search for role models and building one's own identity, and also at a time of emotional weakness. At this stage of the life cycle, the role of the *Madrich* presents the young person with responsibilities and commitments that favor stability, certain routine and organization and, in many cases, a stable and structuring support framework. It involves the responsibility to become a role model for many children who regard the *Madrich* as a teacher, a guide and an idealized figure. It also results in the acknowledgment and recognition from others (parents and children), which in turn enhances well-being. This is particularly relevant as several studies have found that life satisfaction decreases during adolescence as a natural consequence of that specific stage of the life cycle and of the passage from childhood into adulthood (Goldbeck et al. 2007; Shek and Liu 2014). These responsibilities and commitments, the need to organize time and the occupation of a portion of free time, along with the acknowledgement and recognition from others, are all elements that may help reduce negative emotions and risky behavior in young people.

## 4.10　Conclusion

This chapter has examined the significance of the *Hadracha* in the Jewish community. For many years, a number of approaches have been developed to prevent the assimilation of the Jewish people living outside the State of Israel (diaspora) and, while formal education is considered to be a key factor in the attainment of such objective, it has become increasingly evident that formal education alone cannot ensure the continuity

of the tradition and of Judaism (Chazan 2003; Reimer 2007).

The *Hadracha* leaves marks, memories and experiences pregnant with contents and feelings. This type of learning and experiences leave more permanent and meaningful traces.

The chapter has also explored the relevance of the *Hadracha* during adolescence, a stage of the life cycle in which identification, values, peer group and support frameworks become particularly important. The end of adolescence is a crucial time for assimilation, and going through that stage in a context shaped by Judaism favors the continuity of the tradition (Fishman et al. 2012). The *Hadracha* in adolescents in diaspora, who generally share weak links with religiosity, finds a central role in connecting these young people to their tradition, strengthening the transmission of traditions from generation to generation, bringing about these intergenerational relationships and developing spirituality, which is understood as a search for meaning and purpose in order to find peace and harmony (Mytko and Knight 1999).

Along the same lines, the *Hadracha* plays a central role in young people's life. It is their first work experience and, as such, a form of entering adult life, with the distinctive feature that it is a gradual entry into a well-known familiar world. At the same time, the task of transmitting values and concepts of the Jewish religion and tradition leads the *Madrichim* to rethink and revisit those values and concepts and thus strengthen their identification with Judaism. The activities involved in the *Hadracha* are amusing and recreational; thus, the *Hadracha* is a significant space for socialization that, in addition to reinforcing Jewish identity, allows young people to build solid and long-lasting bonds with their peers (Reimer 2007).

During adolescence—a stage in life where many changes take place—young people find support in the feeling of belonging in an institution, a community, a JCC, in having a social reference group, committing to work schedules and undertaking structured out-of-school activities, and in assuming responsibility for being a model

and referent for younger children. All of these components enhance well-being and help to decrease adolescent risky behaviors. That being said, it is worthy of note that the influence of the *Hadracha* varies among young people: some young people go through *Hadracha* training for several years with pride and responsibility while others do not feel it is the appropriate space for them or do not feel comfortable with the role of *Madrich*.

Many authors have published papers in which they reflect on their experience as a *Chanich*, *Madrich*, *Rosh Madrich, Madrich* trainer, and others (Bryfman 2011; Chazan 1991; Israel 2011). This chapter has adopted that line of work. It would be useful to conduct future studies with interviews to *Madrichim*, who could thus be given agency as protagonists and a space to go deeper into the meaning they attach to their role. Such studies would also allow examining why and how the role of *Madrich* enhances well-being. It would also be a rich experience to be able to work with multiple informants, such as the *Madrichim*, the *Rosh Madrich* (coordinator) and the *Chanichim* (the children that attend the activities), in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of this experience from the viewpoint of those involved. Finally, it would also be fruitful for future studies to compare the *Hadracha* with similar devices existing in different cultural and religious groups, such as boy scouts.

The *Hadracha* process has been around for a long time now and, while the *Hadracha* has certain stable characteristics, it also has particular features that vary among countries and cultures. Such features include the setting where the activities are performed, the importance attached to the religious component, and the structure and frequency of the activities. This chapter has sought to focus on a historical device which is deeply ingrained in the Jewish community, but which is little known outside of it. Given all the characteristics of the *Hadracha*, we have considered it relevant to include it in a Handbook on well-being, sports, recreation and free time.

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Children's Recreational
Engagement with Nature in South
Africa: Implications for Children's
Subjective Well-Being

**5**

Sabirah Adams and Shazly Savahl

**Abstract**

This chapter focuses on merging positive psychology and environmental psychology (sustainability) by exploring children's recreational engagement with nature and the influence on their subjective well-being. The chapter details two studies conducted in the Western Cape of South Africa, in one rural and two urban communities using participatory methodologies with children. Study 1 aimed to explore how children discursively construct natural spaces and the influence on their subjective well-being using focus group interviews, while Study 2 aimed to explore children's representations and perceptions of natural spaces using photovoice and community mapping. Four overarching findings identified from both Study 1 and 2 were the following: *Children's mobility in natural spaces: The role of socio-economic status (SES) and threats to children's safety; Nature as children's space and the influences on their subjective well-being; Children's rights and access to safe natural spaces*; and *Researching children's environmental views and their subjective well-being in South Africa*. Although a fostering and healthy environment for children is a precondition for their well-being, this right is unfulfilled for the majority of children in the South African context. The ability to develop in a safe environment which enhances children's well-being is unjustly distributed amongst the rich and poor, alluding to the importance of considerations of the place dimension of subjective well-being (SWB). The environmental subjective well-being of children is complemented by considerations of the environmental child rights, which foremost advocates for safer recreational environments for all children.

## 5.1 Background and Introduction

Emergent research highlights children's proximate nature views and children's recreational engagement in nature as two related protective factors which essentially advance youth 'resilience' (Wells and Donofrio 2011; Wells 2014). Notwithstanding this, limited research is available which amalgamates the fields of positive psychology with that of environmental psychology (sustainability) (Chawla 2014; Wells 2014). In a seminal article, Kerret et al. (2014) put forward the integrative concept of children's environmental subjective well-being (ESWB) which encapsulates a recent trend in the literature in

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merging theory and research on environmental psychology (sustainability) and positive psychology (see Kerret et al. 2014; McKendrick 2014; Venhoeven et al. 2013; Verdugo 2012; Wells 2014; Wang and Wang 2016). This focus delimits two interconnected concerns of contemporary societies; that of conserving the natural environment and children's subjective well-being (SWB). In this regard, the goals of environmental psychology and positive psychology are evidently consistent, by advocating for individual's well-being and quality of life, in addition to considerations of environmental quality; in effect evincing the theoretical and conceptual relation between the two disciplines. Adhering to the same focus of ESWB, Verdugo (2012) proposed the *positive psychology of sustainability,* Verdugo (2012) that of *positive ecological attitudes* (Kasser 2011), while Huby and Bradshaw (2006) point to the *environmental dimension of child well-being.*

Put forward by Diener (2000, p. 1) subjective well-being is considered as a component of Quality of Life, and is denoted as one's "affective and cognitive evaluations of their lives". Diener's (1984) denotation of SWB is widely conceded in the literature as comprising three distinctive components that is: life satisfaction, positive experiences, and negative experiences. This resonates with the driving force behind the focus on children's SWB which was largely due to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), as well as the 'new social studies of childhood' in the latter part of the twentieth century (Sandin 2014; see e.g. James and James 2004). This proclivity in thinking about children and childhood more broadly mirrors the historical shifts advocated by the child studies movement in the early twentieth century (Sandin 2014). As Casas (2016, p. 10) maintains, "Only in the last few decades have scientists become interested in studying children's and adolescents' well-being from their own perspective. Until very recently, it was assumed that solely adult evaluations on children's well-being data would be valid enough." This culminated in the significance of children's subjective appraisals and evaluations of their lives across numerous disciplines (Casas

2000). Children's SWB was one of these disciplines, in addition to children geographies, which espoused children's rights to participation by enabling children's voices to be heard (see Hart 1979, 1994).

Considering the importance of children's places, and given the vital role of nature in relation to numerous positive developmental outcomes for children, it then becomes essential to shift the lens of interest toward the places in which children spend the majority of their time, their neighbourhoods. The concept of 'neighbourhoods' does not only encompass geographic denotations, but is inherently associated with the 'social' as well (Coulton and Korbin 2007). Coulton and Korbin (2007, p. 350) in their description of neighbourhoods note that:

> As units of social organization, neighborhoods have meaning as places to live or work. They have an identity in the minds of insiders and outsiders. Neighborhoods are more than collections of individuals or locations for populations; they also include space, physical structures, social networks, formal and informal organizations, businesses, systems of exchange and governance, and so forth.

A key motivation behind the focus on children's neighbourhoods as an indicator of children's well-being is that adverse conditions are especially present in neighbourhoods with an abundance of "adverse conditions and risk factors" (Coulton and Korbin 2007, p. 350). As the overwhelming majority of children, 11 out of 18 million (Hall et al. 2012), live in impoverished and adverse conditions in this context, the places children live in and frequent contributes significantly to how they make sense of their lives. Montserrat et al. (2015, p. 115) critically note that: "Poverty among children has a decisive effect on key areas such as health, education and ultimately social opportunities…". An interesting contention, however, is that while impoverishment and poverty contribute to a lack of SWB, impoverishment and poverty in itself does not amount to negative well-being (Ben- Arieh et al. 2014). As McKendrick (2014, p. 279) argues: "where children live is an integral and central part of their childhood experience". Children's well-being in place is further confounded by the

high levels of inequality in this country which in effect has resulted in distinct socio-economic status (SES) groups. These differing SES groups are characteristically associated with distinct outcomes for children, with children in the lower SES groups experiencing countless negative consequences owing to the social conditions of their environments. The impact of the countless challenges which children in South Africa are exposed to on a daily basis demands theorisations of children's participation to be mindful of the manner in which socio-economic conditions shape, and hinder the degree to which children are to enjoy recreational activities in different spaces and environments (Moses 2008).

While the interest in human's connection to the natural world and their well-being is well-established in the literature, particularly with regard to adults, there are limited empirical initiatives which explore children's perceptions of natural spaces and the influence on their subjective well-being (SWB) in particular. In South Africa in particular, children's recreational spaces in nature as well as their mobility within their neighbourhoods is restricted owing to the impending concern of safety. These concerns are tangible, credible threats to children's well-being and is evident in the high levels of crime and violence in the South Africa particularly against women and children.

Yet, despite the substantial body of research indicating that children's recreational engagement in natural spaces are associated with a range of cognitive, physical, affective, and moral developmental benefits (Fjørtoft 2001; Kaplan and Kaplan 1989, 2002; Kellert 2005; Louv 2008; Moore 1986; Wells 2000; Wells and Lekies 2006); many children across the world, particularly within developing countries such as South Africa, are confronted with the challenge of limited access to *safe* natural environments for recreation and leisure in contrast to the affluent minority of the population. A number of researchers in this context in fact indicate that in assessing the natural spaces in which they engage, children identify danger as an integral feature (Adams and Savahl 2015; Chawla 2002; Isaacs and Savahl 2013; Parkes 2007; Savahl 2010; Swart-Kruger

2000) – in essence pointing to the unsafe nature of *nature*. Additionally, adults are becoming increasingly concerned about the diversity of social and environmental dangers facing children in the public realm (Philo 2000). Thus, as articulated by Hart (1994, p. 95), "children's access and mobility to outdoor environmental diversity across the world has to a large extent been curtailed due to fears of crime and traffic". This trend has continued with contemporary literature reporting similar patterns of decreased outdoor engagement (Benwell 2009; Karsten and van Vliet 2006; Louv 2008; MacDougall et al. 2009).

Children therefore, have fewer opportunities for outdoor recreation and engagement in natural spaces (Kahn 2002), which is imperative in encouraging a sense of independence and autonomy, and the development of subjective geographies through the physicality of playing, exploring, living, and learning (Robertson et al. 2001). As Ben-Arieh et al. (2014, p. 1) maintain, in terms of the relation between children's rights and well-being, that:

> Rights are implicitly understood as creating well-being or opportunities for well-being, referring to the quality of children's lives economically and emotionally; to their psychological states; to their material, social, and cultural environments; as well as to their development and to realizing their potentials.

Despite the South African government having commenced with several initiatives to lighten the burden of social inequality and deprivation for children and society at large, fundamental factors in relation to poverty, access to primary health care services, safety, education, and demarcated safe natural spaces for children still plague the majority of children (see Savahl et al. 2015a, b). Quintessentially then, it is obligatory upon government representatives, especially in South Africa, to take a more pronounced position and related action in bettering children's environments by taking into account their rights as stated in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). More so, while legislative enactments espouse the rights of children along a number of domains, the human right for children to connect with nature and to a healthy

environment has not yet been internationally recognised, nor codified in any legally binding United Nations (human rights) treaty.

Research by Montserrat and Casas (2006; see also Dinisman et al. 2012; Montserrat et al. 2015; Navarro et al. 2015) specifically point to the significance of including children from marginalised groups and those enduring social disadvantage (such as children in care), as they offer unique perspectives on their well-being. As children play a pivotal role in society, their attitudes and perceptions relating to natural spaces are significant (Wilks 2010). The manner in which children are educated about nature plays an important role in their future behaviour as adults (Chawla 2007; Wells and Lekies 2006). Much research has previously focused on the reveries of childhood; and the imagined and remembered spaces of childhood that adults recall. However, these accounts were scrutinised by child researchers who argued for the perspectives of children's experiences.

While studies have considered children's understandings of nature and their SWB in separate disciplines, there is an absence of research within the literature which has considered merging these areas, and thereby considering the influence of nature experiences on children's SWB. In light of the current global environmental crisis, research in this area is essential as it has the capacity to raise awareness among children about sustaining the natural environment, as well as considering their well-being in the present, and the future. The study endeavours to provide insights into the manner in which children's understandings of natural spaces may shape, and influence environmental concerns and ecological actions, and in turn their well-being (Littledyke 2002). Moreover, the study endeavours to contribute to the literature by advancing dialogue between the fields of children's environmental views and their well-being.

## 5.1.1 Aim of Study

This chapter reports on two studies which explored children's engagement with natural spaces. Within this process the study aimed to explore the extent to which children's engagement with natural spaces influences their SWB. The objective of each study is detailed below:

### 5.1.1.1 Study 1 Objective
To explore how children discursively construct natural spaces and the influence on their subjective well-being, using specific discursive resources and repertoires to construct and assign meaning to their engagement with natural space, and how their constructions and assignations are manifested in their discourses

### 5.1.1.2 Study 2 Objective
To explore children's representations and perceptions of natural spaces using photovoice and community mapping

### 5.1.1.3 Chapter Structure
This chapter follows with two distinct sections: the first looks at Study 1 by explicating the study method and is followed by the key findings of the study; the second section with the method for study 2 with the ensuing key findings presented thereafter. Finally, the third section comprises the overarching discussion of the key findings of Study 1 and 2, and the implications thereof.

## 5.2 Study 1

**Children's discourses of natural spaces: Considerations for children's subjective well-being**

### 5.2.1 Method

#### 5.2.1.1 Research Design
This study employed a qualitative methodological framework, using the sustained contact method with the participants, to understand how children discursively construct natural spaces and the influence on their subjective well-being, using specific discursive resources and repertoires to construct and assign meaning to their

engagement with natural space, and how their constructions and assignations are manifested in their discourses.

### 5.2.1.2 Research Context

The study was conducted in the Western Cape province of South Africa. The participants were drawn from three primary schools in low and middle SES communities, from both rural and urban geographical locations. The participants were selected from three socio-economically diverse areas in the Western Cape, namely Gordon's Bay, Mitchell's Plain, and Stellenbosch. These areas are explicated upon below.

**Gordon's Bay**

Situated 54 km from the Cape Town central business district, the littoral town of Gordon's Bay has a population 15,786, with predominantly 'White' residents. The majority of the population reside in formal housing with access to basic services, with a populous income bracket of R12 801- R25 600. Most of the have also completed secondary schooling or higher. The crime rate in the town from between 2013 to 2014 was markedly lower than national estimates (South African Police Services 2014).

**Mitchell's Plain**

Mitchell's Plain is situated approximately 32 km from the Cape Town City Centre, and has been identified as one of the most dangerous areas in South Africa with the highest incidence of reported crimes, (www.crimestatssa.com). The population was estimated to be at 310,485, and the majority classified as 'Coloured' (Statistics South Africa 2011). National estimates show that only over a third of the population have completed secondary education or higher. Thirty-eight percent of households have a monthly income of R3200 or less, with the majority living in formal housing. Although national census data shows that the vast majority have access to basic services, the suburb is characterised by a range of socio-economic problems.

**Stellenbosch**

The Stellenbosch Municipality is situated in the centre of the Cape Winelands, and is situated 50 km from the Cape Town City Centre. The municipality has an estimated population of 155,753, with majority classified as 'Coloured'. Forty-three percent have completed secondary education or higher, while 3.1% have not completed any formal schooling. Most of the population live in formal housing and majority having households with access to basic amenities (Statistics South Africa 2011). Nationally, Stellenbosch is ranked among the top 10 areas with the highest incidence of reported crime, evincing amongst the highest incidence of burglary, theft out of motor vehicle, commercial crime, and robbery (www.crimestatssa.com).

### 5.2.1.3 Participants and Sampling

The study sample included 28 children between the ages of 12 and 14 years purposively selected from three primary schools in low and middle income communities, situated in both urban and rural geographical locations in the Western Cape of South Africa. Three groups were selected from the three schools: two of the groups consisted of ten participants each (One group from Seaview- *five girls and five boys*; and one group from Gordon's Bay- *nine girls and one boy*), with the third group consisting of eight participants (Stellenbosch- *five girls and three boys*). The motivation for selecting this age cohort was due to the identification in the literature that children of this age group are more likely to assess their own behaviour and the impact of their subsequent actions upon the environment (Wilson 1996). The primary motivation for the final selection of the three participating schools were dependent on whether they offered access to children from different racial, cultural, language, and socio-economic backgrounds. Additional inclusion criteria for participants included perceived reliability, enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the study.

### 5.2.1.4 Data Collection

Data were collected by means of focus group interviews, characterised by a moderator facilitating and engaging a small group discussion between selected individuals regarding the proposed topic (Catterall and Maclaran 1997). In the

**Table 5.1** Focus group guiding questions

| Focus group 1 | Focus group 2–3 |
|---|---|
| What does being happy mean to you? | What does nature mean to you? |
| What are the things that make you happy? | Tell me about how you spend your time in the natural environment? |
| What do you do for fun? | How does spending time in the natural environment make you feel? |
| What do you do in your free time? | Do you think spending time in nature is important for children your age? |
| What do you understand by the natural environment and natural spaces? | How would you feel if you were unable to engage in natural spaces? |
| | What are your favourite places in nature? Why? What do you do there? |

current study a sustained contact or prolonged engagement model was followed. This entailed a series of nine focus group interview sessions conducted over a 4 month period. The advantage of the sustained contact model is that it gradually enables and facilitates greater access to children's "secrets and worlds as the social distance between adult researcher and child subject is lessened" (Punch 2001, p.6). Consistent with the exploratory design, the focus groups followed a semi-structured interview format, with several core questions per group as presented in Table 5.1.

### 5.2.1.5 Data Analysis

The use of discourse analysis as a method of research within childhood studies has proliferated in recent years (See Alldred and Burman 2005; Kjørholt 2003; Savahl 2010; Savahl et al. 2015a, b). In a previous edition of *Child Indicators Research*, Savahl et al. (2015a, b) used discourse analysis to ascertain children's construction of their well-being. Contemporary thinking on discourse analysis in childhood studies has been greatly influenced by the paradigm shift initiated James and Prout (1990) focusing on social constructionism as it emerged within the sociology of childhood. As a number of variations of discourse analysis exist, notwithstanding the absence of a unified approach or definition,

two broad versions have generally been identified within psychology (Savahl 2010). With its genesis in ethnomethodology and communication studies, the first version focuses on "discourse practices and how speakers draw on various forms of discursive resources to construct particular realities and to achieve certain aims in interpersonal contexts" (Savahl 2010, p. 141; see e.g. Edwards and Potter 1992), while the second version is often associated with the Foucauldian tradition which "focuses on the function of discourse in the constitution of subjectivity, self-hood and power relations" (Savahl et al. 2015a, b, p. 141).

The current study employed the version as proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987), which is a combination of the aforementioned types- a strand of discourse analysis which has been employed to scrutinise language in a broader social context. Discourse in this sense consists of an amalgamation of both spoken and written texts. Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 7) thus state that "*As discourse functions independently of the intentions of speakers or writers, their ideas do not merely serve to order and reflect the social world, but also to construct it*".

The discourse analysis was preceded by thematic analysis. The emerging discourses are analysed within the emerging themes.

### 5.2.2 Key Findings: Study 1

Study 1 explored how children construct and assign meaning to natural spaces. Within this process, the study aimed to explore how children use particular discursive resources and repertoires to construct and assign meaning to their engagement with natural spaces, and the extent to which this influences their subjective well-being (SWB). A large body of literature demonstrates the positive effects of children's engagement with nature on their well-being, with particular emphasis on their physical and emotional well-being (Bell et al. 2008; Chawla 2006; Fjørtoft 2001; Huynh et al. 2013; Kuo and Faber Taylor 2004; Tranter and Malone 2004). No identified studies have, however, considered the

impact of nature experiences on children's SWB in particular.

Data were collected in three socio-economically diverse communities in the Western Cape of South Africa- one rural (Stellenbosch-low SES), and two urban communities (Gordon's Bay- middle to high SES; Mitchell's Plain- low SES). The total sample comprised 28 children between the ages of 12 and 14 years. In line with the exploratory design of the study, a semi-structured interview format was adopted. To make sense of children's discourses, discourse analysis (DA) proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987) was followed.

The key themes which emerged from the study were *Safety and natural spaces*, *Appreciation for natural spaces*, *Degradation of Nature: Thinking environmentally*, *acting pro-environmentally*, and *Natural spaces and children's subjective well-being*. Several discourses emerged from the participants narratives, which are located in the aforementioned themes. These themes are discussed below.

### 5.2.2.1  Theme 1: Safety and Natural Spaces

The first theme emphasised the inextricable link between children's recreational engagement in nature and the concern around their safety. Socio-economic status was shown to be a key factor influencing children's lives in their communities; this had a direct effect on their experiences in, and the meaning they attach to natural spaces, as well as their well-being. The concern of credible threats to safety was a recurring theme, especially for the children living in the rural and urban schools which were located in hotspots of criminal activity in the province. This is demonstrated in the extract below.

**Extract 1**

**Group 1: Session 1**
**Facilitator:** So…why are you indoors a lot?
**Male Participant:** It is safer inside than to be outside.
**Female Participant:** Because of the violence.
**Male Participant:** They shoot a lot.

**Male Participant:** The people are gang related there.
**Male Participant:** It is actually ourselves that is worried about it.
**Male Participant:** We – said now we are scared of dying, but it is, but me, I am, most of the time outdoors. In my area we have a park.
**Male Participant:** [continues]…So I am mostly outside, I am with friends, but in some areas it is not that dangerous. Because for me, I am not actually scared of dying, to be honest.

The most prominent discourse to emerge in this theme was that of *Safety as a pervasive concern*, especially for children from the low-SES communities. Children indicated that this looming concern of threats to their safety negatively influenced their well-being, with many describing post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms such as anxiety, hyper-vigilance, and ultimately the fear of death. The fears which children indicated were apparent in their community as well as home environments, largely due to high rates of crime and violence in their community. For many of the children from the low SES communities, nature was synonymous with danger as natural spaces were made sense of as open public spaces which was a breeding ground for all forms of illicit activity. On the other hand, the children from the middle SES community portrayed entirely contrasting narratives of their experiences of daily life, as well as their engagement with nature. These children instead made reference to fears of *'wild nature'* owing to the area in which they live such as being attacked by baboons, and spiders and insects.

### 5.2.2.2  Theme 2: Appreciation for Natural Spaces

Children's appreciation of natural spaces was pervasive in their discussions, in spite of the concern of personal safety. This highlighted nature as an important place and space to children. This theme was related to the previous theme of *Degradation of Nature and efforts toward Sustainable development*. This theme is explored in more detail below.

**Extract 2**

**Group 2: Session 1**
**Female Participant:** Of everything that's in the outdoors like the stuff that grew by itself it didn't – it wasn't man made.
**Female Participant:** I think of it because I love exploring in the nature and like taking pictures of things that I don't really know much about…
**Co-Facilitator:** Do you guys go to the beach a lot?
**Female Participant:** Yes.
**Female Participant:** Surfing.
**Female Participant:** I just like laying on the grass and watch the clouds and the birds and the trees or something.
**Co-Facilitator:**…how does that make you feel?
**Female Participant:** Relaxed.
**Female Participant:** I also like cycling in the mountains.
**Female Participant:** Then you like feel away from everything you can just be like yourself… Get away from all the electronic stuff and worries…

Evidenced from the extract above it is ostensible that nature is a special place for children. Children's discussions of their experiences in and engagement in pointed to nature being more familiar to some children than others, particularly for those who have more affordances to engage in nature. There was unanimity among children that nature is sanctuary or refuge for them, as being in nature made them feel happy and "relaxed". A female participant points to how being in nature makes "you like feel away from everything you can just be like yourself…" Children showed a predilection for playing with friends in natural spaces, and at other times just spending time by themselves – in the serenity of nature.

There was also a difference in terms of what nature meant to children. For one participant nature comprises things that grow outdoors, autonomously, hence "it wasn't man made." However, for a group of children from one of the low-SES communities, safe natural spaces were not only less accessible, but included built places

with superficial aspects of nature. This superficial nature included the aquarium, a theme park and a games centre. These constructions of *superficial nature* may be linked to the lack of access and therefore experiences in nature of the children in these impoverished communities. Despite this limited access and engagement in natural spaces, the key experiences children take from nature are vivid memories with positive meanings. Children's recollections of their nature experiences in low-SES communities were based on noteworthy, distinct, limited experiences in nature.

### 5.2.2.3 Theme 3: Degradation of Nature: Thinking Environmentally, Acting Pro-environmentally

The issue of environmental degradation and pollution was prevalent in children's discussions and was related to the state of their neighbourhoods. The polluted natural spaces were another factor limiting children's play, as well as the exploration of their environments. However, there was a stark contrast in terms of children from low and middle SES communities. This is demonstrated in the extract below.

**Extract 2**

**Group 1: Session 1**
**Facilitator:** Do you think there are any other things that could play a role on your well-being?
**Female Participant:** Environment.
**Interviewer:**...Can you tell us a little bit more about that, what you mean?
**Female Participant:** It's…like it's not clean it is dirty and you can get sick.

**Group 2: Session 2**
**Interviewer:** So what kind of things are they doing by not respecting nature?
**Male Participant:** Polluting [All respond] dumping on the fields [All respond]
**Female Participant:** We do not really play in the parks as there is lots of glass and things.

The children clearly indicated that the environment influences their subjective well-being. The depiction of their communities as "dirty" and polluted had a direct impact on children's health, which resulted in most of them with most evading nature as a space for recreation. The trepidation around contamination from polluted fields and parks was discussed often. Children therefore maintained a predilection for playing in safe natural spaces at school, as nearby parks are laden with broken glass and other debris, and is also a hub for criminal activity which is a real threat to their physical well-being. This was demonstrated by the discourse of *nature as the despoiled space.* This discourse made alluded to the polluted state of nature in their communities as characteristically unsafe spaces. The purpose for children's narratives presented a discourse of '*repudiation of responsibility'* (see Adams and Savahl 2015). This repudiation and externalisation of responsibility to others to be environmentally conscious and clean up litter represents the use of a justification (Potter and Wetherell 1987) by those who pollute.

### 5.2.2.4  Theme 4: Nature and Children's Subjective Well-Being

It was evident from children's narratives as well as the meanings they ascribe to their experiences in natural spaces that it influenced their SWB. This is explicated in the extract below.

**Extract 7**

**Group 2: Session 1**
**Co-Facilitator:** How important is nature for you to feel well and happy?
**Female Participant:** Very.
**Female Participant:** Yes, we can't if there weren't any trees which pollinated them we couldn't breathe.
**Male Participant:** Fresh.
**Male Participant:** Free.
**Male Participant:** Happy.
**Male Participant:** Excited, energetic.
**Male Participant:** It gives you good exercise.

**Group 1: Session 1**
**Male Participant:** It makes me feel good.
**Male Participant:** No mother shouting with you.
**Male Participant:** (All talk at once) but when you are in nature; it is like heaven on earth there is nothing stopping you.

The extract above demonstrates the positive effect that engaging directly in nature has on children's SWB. A female participant indicated that being in nature affects her emotional well-being. The participants often discussed several domains of SWB that is influenced by recreational experiences in nature, namely physical, emotional, psychological, and social. The discourse which was evident in children's accounts here was that of discourse of *intrinsic care for nature*. Children discussed how playing in nature was crucial for their physical health and well-being. Children also accentuated the benefits of participating in sport activities at school which allowed them to be in open greenspace, fostering congenial experiences for children residing in low-SES communities. Regarding the impact of nature experiences on children's affect, while children strongly conveyed the positive emotions, negative emotions often dominated children's experiences in nature from lower SES neighbourhoods. More so, this discourse of *nature as the dangerous other* appeared to be more than just a probable threat to children; this sense of fear was part of children's daily lives, with every aspect of their lives being viewed through a *safety lens* (see Adams and Savahl 2015; Parkes 2007). An apt exemplification of the critical role of nature on children's subjective well-being was a participant's conjecture that "when you are in nature it is like... heaven on earth there is nothing stopping you."

The key recommendations which were presented in this study was the need for indicators of children's subjective well-being to include nature engagement and experiences as a domain. Additionally, both the local and international literature would benefit from merging environmental and positive psychology in an effort to explore and understand how natural spaces influence

children's well-being and quality of life. Further research studies are needed in this context to explore the concerns at hand with children across South Africa taking into consideration the diverse cultures, languages, and whether religious orientation plays a role.

## 5.3    STUDY 2

**Children's representations of nature using photovoice and community mapping: Perspectives from South Africa**

### 5.3.1    Method

#### 5.3.1.1  Research Design
This study employed a qualitative methodological framework, using the sustained contact method with the participants, to explore children's representations and perceptions of natural spaces using photovoice and community mapping.

#### 5.3.1.2  Research Context
In both Study 1 and Study 2, data were collected in the Western Cape of South Africa, within the same communities of Gordon's Bay, Mitchell's Plain, and Stellenbosch. For detailed descriptions of these contexts see page 7 of this chapter above.

#### 5.3.1.3  Participants and Sampling
The sample for Study 2 comprised the same group of participants from Study 1. The sample thus included 28 children from both rural and urban geographical locations between the ages of

11 and 14 years of age. A summary of the sample is presented in Table 5.2 below.

#### 5.3.1.4  Data Collection
Data were collected using two participatory techniques, namely photovoice and community mapping. A total of six discussion groups were held with the participants.

#### Photovoice
In the current study one photovoice training session was held, and one photovoice feedback session where participants discussed their printed photographs with the research team. Children were asked to take photographs of the places that make them happy and unhappy, as well as their favourite places in nature. They were provided with a 24 exposure disposable cameras and given a period of 7 days to conduct their photovoice missions. Before carrying out their photovoice missions, group discussions were held with the participants which focused on the natural spaces they engage in. Potential research questions were then collaboratively formulated with the participants. The participants were also trained in basic camera and photography techniques, and familiarised with the ethical employment of community photography such as the use of cameras, power, and the responsibility and authority conferred on participants with cameras (Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001). Photovoice ethics guidelines were followed throughout the study (see Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001). Wang and Redwood Jones (2001) further discuss that the safety of the participants must be the fundamental consideration. The photovoice mission session was carried out by the children independently after

**Table 5.2**  Sample composition

| Research site | Sample | Age | Grade | Socioeconomic status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gordon's Bay (Urban) | n = 10 (9 girls; 1 boy) | 12 | 6 | Middle |
| Mitchell's Plain (Urban) | n = 10 (5 girls; 5 boys) | 11–12 | 6 | Low |
| Stellenbosch (Rural) | n = 8 (5 girls; 3 boys) | 12–14 | 5–7 | Low |

school where they were either accompanied by an older sibling or parent. As proposed by Wang and Burris (1994), the group discussions were facilitated by the following questions: What do you see here? What is really happening here? How does this relate to our lives? Why does this problem or strength exist? What can we do about it? An ensuing group discussion was conducted whereby the participant provided narratives explicating the significance and the meanings their pictures hold for them, which was followed by group views of what the photograph represents.

### Community Mapping

Community mapping was employed as a visual data collection technique which provided a unique representations of children's worlds in this study. Amsden and VanWynsberghe (2005) note that community mapping may be utilised to not only document geographically significant spaces and places, but also additional varieties of abstract data. This abstract data and intricacies in children's maps are made sense of when children provide in-depth narratives for the detail therein. Widely considered as an empowerment and child-centred technique, community mapping is foregrounded on "validating the knowledge and experiences of participants" (Amsden and VanWynsberghe 2005, p. 361). Additionally, given the participatory nature of this technique, it is considered to address the issue of power dynamics and inequities present in the research-participant relationship. This data collection technique was complemented by photovoice, and focus group interviews (reported elsewhere).

### 5.3.1.5 Data Analysis

The discussion groups with children about their photographs and maps were analysed using thematic analysis. More specifically, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to undertaking a theoretical thematic analysis was employed. Theoretical thematic analysis is closely related to the researcher's theoretical proclivities and is usually coded to align with the study's research aims. *Phase 1*, familiarising oneself with the

data, involved an immersion in the data which was characterised by repeated readings of the transcripts. In *Phase 2*, the initial codes were generated, followed by *Phase 3*, which focused on the identification of the themes based on the initial codes. In *Phase 4*, the themes were reviewed and refined, with *Phase 5* entailing defining and the final naming of the themes. *Phase 6* focused on the production of the study findings based on the first five phases of analysis.

### 5.3.1.6 Procedure and Ethics

Ethics clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Senate Research and Ethics Committee at the university where the researchers are based. Once permission was gained from the principals of the respective schools, ethics clearance was then sought from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). The participants who were interested in participating were recruited by the grade 6 head of department, and at one school, the school counsellor. Children were only able to participate if signed consent was obtained from their parent or guardian, and the children themselves. An initial session was held with the participants wherein the purpose and aim of the study, what their participation would entail, as well as the core ethics principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. The participants were requested to keep the content and discussions that took place within the discussion sessions confidential. The sessions were audio-recorded, with the participant's permission, and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed texts were verified by a research psychologist external to the study. The participants were also informed that the data gathered will be used for a monograph thesis which will be publically available, as well as peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations. Focus group discussions were conducted on the school premises during administration sessions at the beginning of the school day and after school. They were conducted by the primary researchers and assisted by a co-facilitator.

### 5.3.2    Key Findings: Study 2

Study 2 sought to further unpack children's perceptions and experiences in natural spaces by exploring children's representations using photovoice and community mapping. The emphasis, and growing interest in participatory research with children has gained substantial momentum since the adoption of the UNCRC across the world. Photovoice and community mapping are amongst the participatory techniques used most extensively with children. The significance behind employing a qualitative methodological framework using participatory techniques of photovoice and community mapping in this study was that it allowed children the space to delineate their favourite places in their community, as well as allowing children to interpret their maps and photographs themselves.

The study was conducted in three socio-economically diverse communities in the Western Cape of South Africa, namely Mitchell's Plain, Stellenbosch, and Gordon's Bay with the same sample of children from Study 1. Data were collected by means of photovoice and community mapping. Prior to the photovoice 'mission session', children were involved in a photography session with the researcher as facilitator where it was demonstrated how to use the cameras, discussed the broad research question, as well as the ethics of photography. Children were asked to photograph the places in their community which are their favourite, as well as the unsafe spaces. Importantly, the ethics of photography were discussed with the children, with three consent forms being used. The data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis.

The central findings which emerged from this study were made sense of in three key themes that is, *Safe spaces in nature*, *Unsafe spaces in nature*, and *Children's favourite places in nature*. Analogous to the findings from Study 1, SES proved to be a determining factor moulding children's accounts, understandings, and representations of natural places and spaces. The children from the low-SES communities most often depicted and photographed safe places close to home with a smaller range in mobility, while children from the middle SES community frequented their favourite natural places more often, which was evident in their representations. Children's photographic representations starkly reflected the influence of SES on their understandings and the meanings they attach to not only natural spaces but other public spaces. The children from the low SES communities predominantly photographed parks close to home which were unsafe for them and younger children, as well as polluted spaces in their community. This resulted in many children from the low SES communities opting to photograph *superficial nature*, such as a plant nursery and burial park, while children from the middle SES community photographed serene and diverse representations of nature such as outings to the beach, the mountain, and pictures of 'wild nature'. Solidifying the characteristically unsafe demeanour of their neighbourhoods, the children from the low SES communities depicted a majority of unsafe spaces on their maps. While this sense of danger was not explicitly mentioned by children from the middle SES community, the undertones of safety concerns were evident when these children mentioned that they were accompanied by a parent or adult to take their photographs. However, most often it was 'wild' components of nature which these children referred to. The examples of children's photographs from the photovoice mission, and maps from the community mapping can be accessed on the following link: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Q18-UkW7UYJDMs_ds-pBORTqzx-irjcj

The fundamental point being made here is that access to natural spaces and places should be a basic right of children, given that nature was found to be a special place of children. The socioeconomic status of children's communities should not determine children's access or mobility within their communities, as they should have the opportunity to explore and navigate their way through nature without the impending fear of threat by a criminal element. More so, this should be reflected in the UNCRC which currently speaks only to children's social environments (Article 19 and Article 21), with only Article 29 referring to a key goal of education enabling chil-

dren with knowledge to protect the environment. The key recommendations from this study is to use participatory methods with children as co-researchers employing a child participation model to work towards building environmentally and child friendlier communities.

## 5.4 Discussion

The concept of well-being was the *golden thread* which wove together the main impetus for this study, and further the amalgamation of the disciplines and theories of positive psychology with that of environmental psychology. The shared aims of these disciplines in promoting well-being and quality of life provided an interesting avenue to understand children's connections to nature, and their neighbourhood environments. Although there is a growing proclivity in terms of theoretical contributions to this emerging field (see Kerret et al. 2014; McKendrick 2014; Venhoeven et al. 2013; Verdugo 2012; Wells 2014; Wang and Wang 2016); few studies have delved into this arena particularly with children (see Scianis 2013), thereby advancing the encompassing concept of children's environmental subjective well-being (ESWB) (see also Kerret et al. 2014). The focus on children's constructions of nature and place attachment were imbued with the considerations of children's well-being in this study. Children's well-being in a sense served as a broad framework of understanding within which the concerns and main aims of the study were located.

The current study endeavoured to contribute to the international dialogue and literature concerning children's recreational engagement with natural spaces and the accruing impact on their subjective well-being (SWB). The context of the study, and the specific geographical locations in which the study was conducted provided new insights, and reinforced previously identified concerns around children's well-being in South Africa (see Adams and Savahl 2015; DSD et al. 2012; Isaacs and Savahl 2013; Parkes 2007; Savahl 2010; Savahl et al. 2015a, b). Four key overarching findings emerged from Study 1 and 2 that is:

- *Children's mobility in natural spaces: The role of socio-economic status (SES) and threats to children's safety*
- *Nature as children's space and the influences on their subjective well-being*
- *Children's rights and access to safe natural spaces*
- *Researching children's environmental views and their subjective well-being in South Africa*

These key findings are expounded upon in the following section.

### 5.4.1 Children's Mobility in Natural Spaces: The Role of Socio-economic Status (SES) and Threats to Children's Safety

One of the overarching findings in Study 1 and 2 was that socio-economic status (SES) was a determining factor of how children make sense of nature and the accompanying influence this had on their well-being. This evinced the nuances in children's understandings of natural spaces owing to their distinctive neighbourhood geographies. Children's neighbourhoods, the 'dominant locality' of their daily lives, are imbued with numerous concerns around their personal safety-these concerns were heightened for children from the low SES communities as they faced pervasive threats. Although the low SES neighbourhoods in this study are deemed amongst the most dangerous in the country, other local studies conducted in various contexts have identified safety as a ubiquitous concern for children across South Africa (see Adams and Savahl 2015; Isaacs and Savahl 2013; Parkes 2007; Savahl et al. 2015a, b; Swart-Kruger and Chawla 2002). A key consideration for these studies resonates with McKendrick's (2014) contention that "where children live interfaces with other factors to shape children's well-being." (p. 279). While he contends that where children live does not determine their well-being, it is crucial to note that in the context of South Africa, children's residential geographies plays a key role in how children

made sense of their lives. This was clearly a result of the dangers which they are confronted with on a daily basis which affects their well-being in turn influenced how they made sense of natural spaces. The socio-economic standing of children's communities exists in a type of reciprocal determinism (Bandura 1994) between SES, safety, children's mobility, and children's access to nature- a cycle which children and community members were not able to regulate. There appeared to be an inescapable link between the inherent characteristics of children's neighbourhoods, especially in terms of the string of negative factors associated with the low SES communities.

The divergent characteristics and social context of children's environments can be considered in terms of Thomson and Philo's (2004) notion of 'classed spaces'. The idea of 'classed spaces' in a sense aptly captures the limits on children's mobility in their neighbourhoods, and how this has numerous impacts on their daily lives, and how they make sense of their experiences in private and public spaces. The term 'class' is employed to indicate the diverse social status, income, resources and quality of life which children experience as a result of the area in which they live (Thomson and Philo 2004). It further delineates the distinct constructions of nature and subjective well-being which children from the two SES communities presented. Children's communities constructed as 'classed spaces' brings with it several implications for children in terms of mobility, and access to safe public and natural spaces; this was further confounded by the lens of safety through which children negotiated their lives. This ultimately impacts upon children's leisure time activities; with children from lower SES communities having fewer opportunities to play unsupervised in their neighbourhoods in comparison to children from middle SES backgrounds. The children from the middle SES community experienced a somewhat more independent mobility and access to nature. For these children, nature was made sense of not merely as the park or the garden at home, but instead included those natural spaces which they

had access to and frequented such as the beach, the forest, hiking in the mountains, and the general exploration of natural spaces in their communities. Conversely, for children from the lower SES communities, their restricted mobility and access to nature shaped their understandings of nature, to the extent that these children often referred to 'superficial nature' such as the plant nursery or the ice rink. This also reflected children's level of familiarity and attachment to nature. Children's mobility and access to nature was directly linked to the SES standing of their communities, which was in turn related to crime and violence present in their communities.

Thomson and Philo (2004) maintain that children from poorer areas in their study were more familiar with their local neighbourhoods, while children from middle-class communities had a more encompassing spatial range (Thomson and Philo 2004). However, it was found that children from the middle SES community in both Study 1 and 2 were more familiar with nature and their local neighbourhoods given their frequent engagement therein, and also had a more comprehensive knowledge of their neighbourhoods. Boys had greater opportunities to play with friends on a close-by field or in the road, while girls spent more time at home as it was perceived by their parents as less safe for girls. Interestingly, boys indicated spending more time indoors, while girls expressed the need to be outside. This contention was particularly found amongst the children from the low SES communities. Evidently, children from the low and middle SES communities made sense of restrictions on their mobilities in different ways- as McKendrick (2014) notes, where children live plays a key role in the childhood experience.

While the issue of children's mobility and designated playspaces are important considerations in relation to the affordances a neighbourhood offers children, children should also have affordances in terms of adaptability of the environment, safe places that are conducive for leisure and reflection, ability to engage with and access friends, and natural environments which are manipulable (McKendrick 2014). In Study 1 and

2, SES directly influenced children's perceptions and experiences of nature, and more so their future life trajectory and well-being. Children's access to natural spaces, and opportunities for engagement were not the only factors impinged upon by these low SES communities being characteristically unsafe. Adding to the dialogue on how SES, in terms of being privileged or disadvantaged, Dorling (2007) comments that the growing divide between the two results in social disintegration, and acts one of the factors which serve to detach children from experiencing a sense of place in their neighbourhood, which is exacerbated by the extreme levels of crime and community violence in their communities.

While these findings paint very bleak prospects for children growing up in challenging contexts, children were able to identify the positive aspects of certain natural spaces and how this had a positive impact on their well-being- they showed a resiliency for growing up in a problem neighbourhood. The context of South Africa embodies the notion that the greater the levels of inequality, the worse the plight of children (Pickett and Wilkinson 2007). Nordström's (2010) conjecture effectively sums this concern up in that: "The safety and security dimension therefore can be said to reflect an emotional quality, of prime psychological importance for children's wellbeing" (p. 525).

Children's narratives from the low SES communities were imbued with not only trepidation around safety, but also displayed symptoms of PTSD, with community violence being a norm. Higgins (1987) contends that negative emotions occur when incongruities are present between an individual's 'ideal self' and 'ought self', which in this study was influenced by children's social contexts and their struggle to engage in safe outdoor places, especially natural spaces. Horelli (2007) notes that when the fit between the person and environment is poor, this may result may be children experiencing their environment as stressful and demanding, which was apparent in children's narratives in this study. The study further found differences in how engagement in nature influences children's sub-

jective well-being. This is considered as the next crucial point.

### 5.4.2   Nature as Children's Space and the Influences on Their Subjective Well-Being

Despite the hazards present in natural spaces, children still made sense of how positive experiences in nature overshadowed the negative and risky; consonant with the concept of the 'good enough hold' (Winnicott 1960). The participants often made reference to various domains of their subjective well-being that is influenced by nature experiences such as the physical, emotional, psychological, and social. Huynh et al. (2013) assert that nature is in fact one contextual determinant of children's emotional well-being. They further indicate that while a large literature base maintains that exposure to nature positively influences people's health and well-being, there is a dearth of empirical evidence to support this (Huynh et al. 2013). The studies which have been undertaken have primarily been conducted in controlled settings, with a growing number of studies being conducted in natural settings, such as camps and Forest (see Knight 2009; Ridgers et al. 2012) and Mountain School (Burgess and Mayer-Smith 2011).

These special places provided children with a place of solace. Children from the middle SES community, having access to safe natural spaces in their community, displayed an environmental knowledge akin to being familiar with nature, which was not apparent from children from the other communities. This knowledge was also evident in children's photographs which captured 'hidden' nature, and special natural places. In contrast, children's photographs from the low socio-economic status communities depicted nature which they did not frequent, such as the park, and the field, what Sancar and Severcan (2010) refer to as 'spectator spaces'; while others took pictures of 'superficial nature'. Children's favourite places were more than just safe spaces which children enjoyed engaging in, as Abbott-Chapman and

Robertson (2009, p. 419–420) aptly note, "*favourite places are idealised constructs of places enjoyed and remembered which assist in regulating negative feelings and coping with perceived stress, whose emotional benefits are enjoyed irrespective of the frequency of visits*". The last point which these authors make was crucial for this study; that is the affective component and children's attachment to special places. Particularly, that children's special places can be revered without an abundance of experiences therein. For most of the children in this study, discussions about their favourite places bore a number of accompanying positive emotions- it made them happy, feel free, feel calm, feel like yourself, and provided them the opportunity to spend time by themselves, or enjoy social connections with friends.

It was the essence of being in and experiencing safe natural spaces which was accompanied by positive emotions by the children. The Tripartite Organizing Framework (Scannell and Gifford 2010) is significant in this sense, as it comprises three components of place attachment, namely person, psychological, and process. The person component is imperative as it points not only to individual but also collective place attachment, especially when a community evinces 'social capital', evincing the importance of social ties and social relationships (Minkkinen 2013). This also relates to the contention by Diener et al. (2010) that 'social capital' is a reciprocal process, whereby people, and especially children, need support from others, and in turn need to contribute by helping better their community, and assisting others. This echoes children's narratives around the eco-crisis, and the need for themselves, and community members to not only think, but behave in environmentally responsible ways- which has undertones of significance for current and future generations. Barthel et al. (2014) refer to 'pockets' of social-ecological memory in reference to community gardening fostering awareness for ecosystems and environmental stewardship. Children's suggestions for pro-environmental behaviour in this study were undoubtedly linked to their *intrinsic care* for nature which precipitated the emotional affilia-

tion for nature as a favourite place. This reflects an amalgamation of one's memories, beliefs, meaning making, and knowledge which together contribute to the significance of a place- evincing the affective aspect of the psychological component of Scannell and Gifford's (2010) Tripartite framework. Given the significance of nature as a special place of childhood, it would be valuable to explore place happiness, or *place subjective well-being* as a domain of well-being. Furthermore, with natural spaces specified as children's favourite places in this study, and the manifest advantages of children's engagement therein, it becomes crucial to harness children's access to natural spaces in their communities.

This consideration for 'youthful being' was explicitly evident not only from children's accounts of their experiences and perceptions of natural spaces, and their favourite places, but was also demonstrated in their maps and photographs. The children's narratives in this study revealed how they made sense of nature as catalyst for social connection. Safe natural spaces acted as a buffer against life's stressors, promoting the development of resilience competencies (Wells and Evans 2003). Notwithstanding the deficiency of nature experiences for most children, their discourses and discussions culminated in an 'environmental identity', which is evident in both environmental psychology and place attachment. Noting the contestation and critique surrounding the conceptualisations of 'nature' and 'identity', Clayton and Opotow (2003) put forward an 'environmental identity' which makes reference to the way in which people familiarise themselves with nature, and how nature forms part of our sense of self (Clayton and Opotow 2003). The environmental identity forms part of our self-concept as we associate ourselves to some type of non-human nature, impacting on the way we make sense of and behave (Clayton 2003). Accordingly, a number of empirical studies have shown that the more time children spend in safe natural spaces, the more they value nature and incorporate it into their sense of self and show intrinsic care for it (Hordyk et al. 2014).

Based on the evidence provided in the literature, as well as in this study, it is thus comprehensible to surmise that increased time spent in nature increases both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of children's well-being – experiences in nature provide children with purpose and meaning in life, increases life satisfaction, and positively influences their quality of life (Kerret et al. 2014).

Consideration of these goals is especially relevant in the current context where although children's rights are espoused, they still face pervasive threats to safety in their communities.

In particular, in terms of threats, many children in this study identified their lack of mobility and ability to explore their environments and to play with friends, which hindered their basic need for autonomy (Ryan and Deci 2000), and right to participation. Thomson and Philo (2004) highlight that the literature points to how children inhabit a local geography which is exceedingly discerned regarding 'permissions and sanctions', which has resulted in children being acutely aware of their 'spatial ranges' and 'territorial limits'- particularly when engaging in places which are outside the bounds of home. With their research similarly conducted across three diverse communities, affording perspectives into the influence of social class on the 'social geographies of children's play', Thomson and Philo (2004) delineate between 'disordered spaces' and 'idle spaces' wherein play was made sense of more of a 'state of *being'* than an activity- which was especially evident in the narratives from girls in this study. They assert that (Thomson and Philo 2004):

> Children and young people probably want spaces suitable less for doing and more for being- for socialising, chatting, hanging out- and as such they may always reject formal, adult designed sites of play in favour of carving out their own informal and disorganised spaces from the adult world around them. (p. 124)

Nature experiences and interactions therefore had a positive influence on children's well-being and served to maintain social connections with friends. While many children faced restriction in terms of access to natural spaces owing to safety concerns along SES lines, it was clear that it was the quality and lasting positive impact which nature had on children and not merely the frequency of contact. On this point Coulton and Spilsbury (2014, p. 1308) assert that:

> …macrostructural forces, such as racial segregation and exclusionary zoning, constrain residential choices and limit the ability of disadvantaged groups to situate themselves in places that foster child well-being.

It further leads us to deduce that children's well-being in their neighbourhood places is impacted upon by objective circumstances and the subjective experiences of that place. This in essence points to the importance of a place-based understanding of children's well-being. It should be putative then that the result of the array of place-based disparities and concerns which children and communities endure is not under local control and entails a national and universal focus.

### 5.4.3 Children's Rights and Access to Safe Natural Spaces

The threats against children in their communities and the disparate levels of mobility and well-being owing to this at a broader level concerns the issue of children's rights. With South Africa as a signatory, and having ratified the UNCRC, the endeavour is to better all children's lives, and not in terms of a hierarchy of SES. Appended to this, is the reality of South Africa having one of the highest levels of inequality in the world (Bosch et al. 2010). While children's rights has been a pertinent issue on the agenda at a national level, with several legislations implemented to counter the violence and abuse against children (such as the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005), the Children's Amendment Act (No.41 of 2007), the Child Justice Act (2008), the inclusion of children in Section 28 of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution, and the ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2000) (see Savahl et al. 2015a, b; September and Dinbabo 2008; September and Savahl 2009),

there is still widespread violence against children. The South African government has thus given precedence to children's well-being as a key development goal (September and Dinbabo 2008). As Savahl et al. (2015a, b) indicate, these progressions in legislation *should* translate into children being protected from abuse and exploitation, and advancing children's socio-economic rights, this is far from being met, and is clearly evident in the increasing levels of crimes against children each year.

Notwithstanding the explicit reference to non-discrimination (Article 2) in the UNCRC, the findings in this study show how the SES of children's communities to a great extent prejudices children. While children are not treated divergently based on their SES, the communities into which they are born by and large determine the lifestyle children may inevitably live in adulthood, thereby perpetuating the numerous inequalities and challenges children face in their childhood; what De Lannoy et al. (2015a, b) term the 'intergenerational transmission of poverty'. Of particular relevance to the current context is Article 19 of the UNCRC which enforces that children are protected from all forms of violence and sexual exploitation (Article 34), which are pertinent, and have not seen success in upholding these articles. This high level of violence, considered the highest in the world, has undoubtedly been influenced by the Apartheid regime whereby 'Coloured' and 'Black' individuals were systematically oppressed, disenfranchised, and denied access to resources. However, 22 years into democracy, South Africa faces even worse conditions, which is especially demanding for children who require protection and assistance from adults. This inherent vulnerability of children is unequivocally addressed by Stainton Rogers (2009) who argues that the United Nations Declaration of Children's Rights, the precursor to the UNCRC gives rise to a 'children's needs' discourse which is often exploited by adults. He contrasts this to the foundation of the 'new sociology of childhood' which espouses children's rights to autonomy, and assumes children's competence, which the UNCRC does not do, and

essentially points to the socially constructed nature of childhood. That is childhood is

> …socioculturally variable, being generated by particular forms of social organisation and culture, rather than simply resulting from universal biological or psychological processes. And, more than this, it is insisted that the subordination of children to adults, and the restricted role currently assigned to them, is open to change, and should be changed. (Stainton-Rogers 2009, p. 573)

Hammersley (2014) notes, however, that assuming the notion of the 'social construction of childhood' has its own challenges. The first concern is that adopting constructionism would result in the refutation of childhood being biologically determined. Secondly, constructionism destabilises the idea of children's well-being and the protections of their rights in the denial of childhood comprising distinctive stages, and also challenges children rights to participation. These critiques against the UNCRC are equally important to note, as some argue that the convention was based on Western liberalism and as such undermines cultural diversity. While the UNCRC has been criticised for demonstrating more Western perspectives than others, it nonetheless affords a good starting point for conceptualising child well-being and understanding the role of engagement in nature on children (Nieuwenhuys 2003). Presenting a normative framework for understanding children's rights and well-being, the UNCRC is often regarded as the genesis of the child indicator movement, and along with the theoretical and methodological assertions of the 'new sociology of childhood' have been significant in driving the notion that children are valid social actors and constructors of knowledge, propagating for child centred research and the need for child specific data. Within the child indicator movement, what followed was the trend toward participatory techniques, a focus on children as the unit of analysis and investigating subjective well-being (Ben-Arieh 2008). This resonates with the Structural Model of Child Well-Being proposed by Minkkinen (2013) which is premised on the 'new sociology of childhood', which along with the disciplines of

environmental and positive psychology espouse the WHO's (1946) denotation of health. Casas et al. (2013), with reference to the International Survey on Children's Well-being (ISCWeB), motivate for the focus on children's subjective perceptions which they believe is critical in assessing and contributing to overall well-being and quality of life.

While the UNCRC speaks to a safe social environment for children (*Article 19 and Article 27*), it does not directly mention the natural environment. The only article which speaks to the natural environment is *Article 29* which states that a key goal of child education should be to enable them to protect the environment. Given the numerous benefits of children engaging in natural spaces for their psychological well-being and overall quality of life (see Huynh et al. 2013), Myers (2012) critically notes, and maintains that children's access to nature should in fact be regarded as a fundamental right of children. Scianis (2013) notes that researchers and policy makers need to advocate for the inclusion of natural environment as a sub-domain of children's SWB- an environmental dimension of children's well-being. As children's well-being has been shown to directly associate with their engagement and experiences in nature, albeit it may be few studies (see Bell et al. 2008; Kuo and Faber Taylor 2004; Fjørtoft 2001; Huynh et al. 2013; Tranter and Malone 2004), it is crucial to increase children's access to safe natural spaces in their neighbourhoods, especially in the current context (see Kerret et al. 2014).

Ultimately, it appeared that children's concerns around their safety played a regulatory role not only on children's mobilities, but their lives as well. It also points to the transactional nature of the relationship between children and their environments Kyttä (2003). Although some children faced with limitations in their ability to engage with nature, this did not deter from the importance and *functional significance* (Heft 1988) of natural spaces to children. Yet, children's natural environments differed in the particular quality of affordances they accessible to children. More so, we can potentially categorise

children's place variants in terms of Kyttä's (2004) classification, namely as a '*cell*' where children's mobility is heavily constrained, and are thus not able to explore their environments, and as '*glasshouses*', which entails that while children perceive the world as full of opportunities for activities and engaging, they do not have access to these places. These two classifications were predominantly evident in children from the low SES communities, and a few children from the middle SES communities. The place type known as the 'Bullerby' was more applicable for children from the middle SES, and comprises children having the ability to freely move around their environment, with the environment positively influencing them.

### 5.4.4 Researching Children's Environmental Views and Their Subjective Well-Being in South Africa

The study findings contribute greatly to the otherwise unexplored understandings of children's subjective perceptions of their lives, and the role of natural spaces they are able and unable to engage with. The weight and priority given to local and global environmental problems have further spurred, or attempted to spur, environmental consciousness amongst the global community. By focusing on children's environmental perceptions, the hope is to foster an environmental ethic and intrinsic care for nature to mitigate current environmental consequences of climate change and global warming. And more so, to encourage the intergenerational transmission of environmental knowledge and learning across both formal and informal platforms which children are part of, in both inter-personal and intra-personal contexts such as schools, children in care, at home, and part of both structured and unstructured leisure activities. For many children in the current study, and similarly across South Africa, children's well-being in their communities is detracted from owing to burdens of social circumstance. Children's perceptions of their

neighbourhood environments, and the natural spaces therein, can therefore not be considered without being mindful of the impact of the unequal character underpinning the South African society. This was clearly demonstrated in the nuances in children's constructions and understandings, and level of threat children are confronted with.

The various participatory techniques employed in Study 1 and 2 are especially significant in this regard as there is a dearth of research on both children's perceptions of natural spaces and children's SWB, and thus allowed for further probing and depth exploration on the topic. The current study is the first identified to explore the subject, and amongst a select few studies which have attempted to understand the topic at hand by merging the disciplines of environmental psychology and positive psychology (see Kerret et al. 2014; McKendrick 2014; Venhoeven et al. 2013; Verdugo 2012; Wells 2014; Wang and Wang 2016). This evinces the contemporary trend which has emerged amongst scholars in assimilating theory and research on environmental psychology (and sustainability), and positive psychology. This merger places emphasis on the importance that engaging with the natural environment has on children's well-being and quality of life. The goals of these two research traditions are consonant; that is to enhance individual's well-being and quality of life, as well as their environmental quality- pointing to how these traditions are theoretically related. Wells (2014) notes that a paradigm shift has ensued across disciplines since the WHO's (1946) definition of health focusing on saluto-genesis, thus on the basis of health as opposed to pathogenesis. Paramount to these two fields is the 'future orientation' focus, to not only enhance feelings of well-being and happiness in terms of the interplay between the person and environment, but to strive toward aspirations, flourishing, and gain a sense of meaning in life thus assimilating eudaimonia. This attention to 'future orientation' in turn feeds into discussions around positive behaviours, such as sustainability and the current influences which mould future environmentally protective behaviours. Given the

above discussion, Wells (2014, p. 96) poignantly remarks that "despite the seemingly convergent foci of research on human resilience and studies of nature and well-being, relatively little attention has been given explicitly to the connection between the two literatures". Yet, the evidence from contemporary research in merging these two traditions shows promise in further ascertaining how children's engagement in nature influences their subjective well-being in particular, and further to develop an encompassing theory on *environmental subjective well-being*.

Considering the lack of research on the SWB in developing countries in general, and the current context in particular, it is important to note the initiatives and work which are currently being undertaken to address this gap. Amongst these are the *Children's Worlds: International Survey of Children's Well-Being* (ISCWeB) and the *Multinational Survey of Children's Well-Being*. Both these international collaborative studies were developed given the impetus in the literature around children's agency and participation, and promoting child-centred perspectives with children aged 8–12 years. The *Multinational Qualitative Study of Children's Understandings of Well-Being (CUWB)* aims to understand children's perceptions of well-being and their daily lives using a qualitative perspective, and was conceptualised as the qualitative counterpart to the Children's Worlds project. Study 1 and 2 form part of and contribute to the CUWB project which is a collaborative international initiative between 25 countries.

More so, it is significant to emphasise how place, particularly in terms of SES and geographical locations served to be a definitive component of children's well-being in this study. In line with this is the consideration as to what constitutes a 'good place' for children which holds significance for children's current and future well-being. Places are considered to be 'good' when children are not burdened by household income or poor housing, as well as where they are given the opportunity to attain positive outcomes in both health and education, and importantly where risk, negative behaviours and deficient relationships are obviated (McKendrick 2014). If we are

to use this conception of a 'good place' for children then it should be noted that the vast majority of areas in this context are in effect the opposite-that is 'bad places'. This is demonstrated in the 11 of 18 million children in South Africa who live in impoverished and unsafe conditions. Additionally, this holds significance as the threats which children referred to in this study are not borne by children alone; it in fact points to safety concerns which every individual, regardless of SES or class are faced with. It so happens that areas with a higher SES have less social disarray and disorganisation, and face far fewer social problems which would make these places accordingly better places for children. McKendrick (2014) therefore duly critiques whether the notion of 'good places for children' "are merely aggregations of children with already positive outcomes or, more fundamentally, are places which are positively enriching children's lives."

Notwithstanding the legislation enactments which are in place to protect children, as well as numerous community-specific initiatives in addition to policing, the exceeding levels of inequality coupled with one of the highest crime rates in the world does not bode well for children in this context. An overarching consideration then is how key stakeholders can begin to address the challenges children face, to move toward and create better spaces for children, which is essentially captured in the notion of Child Friendly Communities and cities (CFC). The aim of 'good places for children' should be inclusive of both structured and unstructured natural spaces which has been shown to positively influence children's subjective well-being, and more holistically to advocate for children's *environmental subjective well-being* (ESWB). The significance of children's ESWB amalgamates the three main tensions and disciplines in this study, that of environmental psychology, place attachment, and their subjective well-being. Moreover, the espousing of the ESWB of children takes account of the environment not merely as the physical localities which children occupy, but more so the social conditions of these environments, and how children's broader community and local neighbourhood influences their SWB. This alludes to

the importance of considerations of the place dimension of SWB. The ESWB of children is complemented by considerations of the environmental child rights, which foremost advocates for safe environments for all children. At the crux of children's rights which are espoused the world over attributable to the UNCRC is the fundamental mandate of an environment which enables children's positive development and the ability to flourish (see Schubert 2012).

Although a fostering and healthy environment for children is a precondition for their well-being, this right is unfulfilled for the majority of children in the South African context. The ability to develop in a safe environment which enhances children's well-being is "unjustly distributed" amongst the rich and poor. In South Africa, children's subjective well-being is closely related to the context in which children; with some children disproportionately affected by neighbourhoods which are characterised by crime and violence and fear of threat. It thus points to the contention that resonates very closely with the current unequal society in that *"Without a realignment of political, legal and economic conditions this situation will not fundamentally change."* A crucial consideration then, particularly in relation to the nuances present in children's conceptualisations of nature and SWB, is whether children's ability to access and engage in safe natural spaces and environments is deemed a right or a privilege or childhood. While only two articles in the UNCRC speak specifically to aspects of the natural environment, the overtones of the convention necessitate that all children have access to optimal living and environmental conditions. As children's narratives and discourses reveal that natural spaces has positive affective influences, and proffers a space for both 'doing' and 'being' it becomes crucial to provide every child with the opportunity to engage in safe natural spaces which in turn affords children innumerable developmental benefits. In order for children's places and neighbourhoods to be augment children's well-being it should advance *inclusivity* (providing equal opportunities and experiences to all children); *participation* (affording children agency and to be key role-players and decision-

makers in influencing and utilising their environments); *environments of opportunity* ("providing children with spaces and facilities that enable to enhances their well-being", p. 294); and *be resourced* (having the basic and vital services which promote quality of life for the present and future) (McKendrick 2014). These essential components of a 'good place' for children's well-being should also be thought of in terms of access to and experiences in natural spaces, that is in terms of being inclusive, participative, provide environments of opportunity, and be resourced. McKendrick (2014) affirms that this taxonomy indorses a standard to which all neighbourhoods and communities ought to endeavour.

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# Healthy Habits and Healthy Spaces: Children's Views on Their Use of Time and Space

**6**

Carmel Cefai

## Abstract

Children's views on their use of leisure time and community space for play, socialising and physical exercise, and how satisfied they are with the quality of such time and space, constitute a critical aspect of the study of children's wellbeing. This chapter presents the findings of two studies, one quantitative and one qualitative, on the views of Maltese children on their use of free time and the relevant spaces and facilities available for them in the community. The first section presents the findings of a survey with a representative sample of 8–12 year old children, examining their views on how they spend their leisure time and on the quality of the spaces and facilities available for them for play, leisure time and other activities in their communities. The second section explores children's views on these issues in more depth through the use of focus groups with a small number of children. The final section discusses the findings from the two studies, concluding with the need to listen to the voice of children in seeking to improve their use of time and community space to enhance their quality of life and wellbeing

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## 6.1 Introduction

Leisure time and community space are a key aspect of children's overall wellbeing and directly related to their quality of life. The way they plan and use their leisure time as well as the quality of the spaces provided for play, socialising, and engagement in other activities such as physical exercise, are related to children's level of overall wellbeing and health (Rees et al. 2016). Children's own views on their use of leisure time and community spaces, and how satisfied they are with the quality of such time and spaces, constitute a critical aspect of the study of children's wellbeing (ibid.). This chapter explores the views of Maltese children on how they make use of their free time and on the relevant spaces and facilities available for them in the community. The first section presents the findings of a survey with a representative sample of 8–12 year old children, examining their views on sports and exercise, organised activities, television and social media, friends and study time, as well as their thoughts on the quality of the spaces and facilities available for them in their communities for play, leisure time and other activities. The second section explores children's views on these issues in more depth through the use of focus groups with a small number of children. The final section then discusses the findings from the two studies, concluding with the need to listen to the

voice of children in seeking to improve their use of time and community space to enhance their quality of life and wellbeing.

## 6.2    Background

As a small, post-industrial island state within the EU at the turn of the twenty first century, Malta continues to experience continued social and economic growth with impact on the wellbeing of its population. One of the more apparent changes has been the increasing urbanisation of the island with more residential areas being built up, more towns and villages being linked together as one large conurbation, more traffic and cars and less space for eco- friendly means of transport such as bicycles, and less green areas and space for recreation and exercise. Indeed Malta is one of the most densely populated countries in the world and the most densely populated EU state, with about 1265 inhabitants per square kilometre. Such changes have a clear impact on the health and wellbeing of the community, particularly young children who have less open spaces for play, recreation and exercise, particularly in their own neighbourhoods.

It may not be surprising that Maltese children are amongst the most overweight and obese children in the world, a condition related to various factors such as diet, sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise amongst others. In the latest Health Behaviour in School-age Children (HBSC) by the World Health Organisation (Inchley et al. 2016), 11–15 year old Maltese children and young people were the most overweight and obese (27%) amongst 40 countries across Europe. In a study with the entire primary and secondary school population in Malta (42,000 children) making use of BMI, Grech et al. (2017) found that 40% of school children in Malta are overweight or obese, with the proportion of obese children greater than that of overweight. Decelis et al. (2014) examined physical activity, screen time and obesity status in a nationally representative sample of 1126 Maltese boys and girls aged 10–11 years. Only 39% of boys and 10% of girls

met the recommendation of 1 h of daily physical exercise. Girls were less active than boys at all measured times and spent less time on the screen. A quarter of the children exceeded guidelines of 2 h of TV on weekends, and double the amount on weekdays. Obese children were less active than normal weight children on weekdays and on weekends**.** The HBSC study also found that as Maltese children move from early to middle adolescence their physical exercise decreases, while the rate of exercise amongst 13 and 15 year olds is below the EU average, with less than one fourth engaging in regular exercise (Inchley et al. 2016). A recent Eurobarometer study found that only 11% of Maltese young people aged between 15 and 30 years said they took part in activities held by sport clubs over the past year, with the average across 28 European countries being 29% (European Commission 2018).

Although various studies have been carried out on Maltese children's health and wellbeing (eg. Grech et al. 2017; Decelis et al. 2014; Inchley et al. 2016; The Today Public Policy Institute 2015; Sant Angelo and Grech 2011), most were focused *on* children rather than *with* children. Very few studies explored Maltese children's own views on their own health and wellbeing and issues related to their quality of life, such as exercise, use of leisure time, neighbourhood and play areas. This study seeks to engage with children to capture their views on leisure time, the spaces and people in their environment, and how these influence their wellbeing and quality of life. It is based on a rights-based approach to children' voice which construes children as a valid and invaluable source of knowledge and expertise, having a unique and 'insider' knowledge of childhood and childhood issues (Cefai and Galea 2016). It is thus crucial to seek to gain entry into the conceptual world of the child to understand their lives and experiences and how their wellbeing and quality of life may be improved of the basis of their direct experiences. This chapter presents the findings of Maltese children's views on their leisure time and spaces and its impact on their wellbeing and quality of life. It forms part of an international study which explored children's

views on their overall subjective wellbeing across various contexts such as home, school, peer group and community (Cefai and Galea 2016).

## 6.3 Methodology

### 6.3.1 Background

This study forms part of two international projects on the subjective wellbeing of children. The survey study is part of the Children's Worlds international quantitative study of children's subjective wellbeing (Rees and Main 2015). It explores 8–12 year old children's views on their economic wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, life satisfaction, relationships, and safety amongst others, making use of a standardised questionnaire completed by children A multinational quality study on Children's Understandings of Wellbeing (Fattore et al. 2014) complements the survey project, but focuses on children's meanings of their daily experiences at home, at school, in their community and with their peers. It makes use of child friendly approach consisting of maps, posters and discussions, with children actively involved in researching their own wellbeing.

### 6.3.2 Survey Study

A representative sample of 3000 children aged 8, 10, and 12 from the three main school sectors in Malta (state, church and independent) was selected to participate in the study. Two representative classes were randomly selected by the Head of School for each age group on the basis of the criteria provided by the research team. The same schools were used to select the 8 and 10 years students respectively, since both attend primary school. The 12 year old attended the first year of the middle school. The final survey data set contained questionnaires from 2777 participants. Weights were applied so that the proportion of children in the data set in each group is equivalent to the proportion of children in that group in the population.

Three versions of a questionnaire were developed, one for each age group, exploring the same issues, but with some variations, particularly in the questionnaire for 12 year olds which included more items. The questionnaires explored such topics as home and people children live with, friends and other people, the area where they live, school and bullying, use of time, and views about themselves, their life and their future. They included questions about frequency of activities, satisfaction scales, agreement scales, and socio-demographic characteristics. Three types of scales were used to measure each aspect of children's lives, namely, agreement (five point unipolar agreement scale), satisfaction (11 point scale), and frequency (of activities in last week, month, year). The questionnaires were translated into Maltese making use of a backward and forward procedure, piloted with a focus group with each age group, and amended accordingly. The questionnaires were completed by the participants at school under the guidance and supervision of a researcher from the project.

Analysis of the findings, included weighted descriptive analysis of all age groups followed by means for gender and age. The Chi-Square test and the One-way ANOVA test were used to make inferences through tests of hypothesis; where differences are noted as significant, they relate to a p-value below 0.05.

### 6.3.3 Qualitative Study

Two state schools, one primary and one middle school, were identified from the survey sample to participate in a small scale qualitative study exploring children's views in more depth. The primary school is located in the northern part of Malta which is broadly characterised with mixed intake of students, while the middle school is in the southern part of the country with most students coming from low socio-economic status. Ten mixed gender students from each school, aged 8/9 and 12/13 respectively, were selected to participate in a focus group interview session. Focus group interviews consisting of a number of tasks with each group, making use of a child-driven qualitative

research framework developed by Fattore et al. (2014). The tasks included mapping important aspects of the various aspects of the children's wellbeing, mapping what makes children feel good in the various systems in which they operate such as home, community and school, changing important aspects of children's wellbeing, and designing a poster to show that it is like to be a child in Malta. The students were divided in small groups and through drawing, colouring or pasting pictures, had to produce a map illustrating their views on children's wellbeing and what makes them feel good in their various contexts including leisure time and the local area.

Two researchers led the focus groups; one took the primary role of asking questions and directing discussions, while the second took notes of salient topics that arose during the sessions and assisted *the former* through additional probing questions where required. Notes included common themes and any interesting points and/or topics that were brought up by the participants themselves. Following the focus groups, notes taken were typed and kept for subsequent research stages. The maps of each focus group were then analysed thematically to identify the common themes emerging from the data. The thematic analysis sought to capture the participants' views on the various aspects of their experience, with various themes identified though an iterative process of coding and grouping into themes until the final themes were finalised. These were then discussed with the other researchers in the project who were not involved in data collection as part of the verification and validation process.

## 6.4 Findings

### 6.4.1 Survey Findings

The participants in both age groups said that they spend most of their time doing homework, watching TV, and using the computer. These activities were followed by helping with housework, reading for fun and sports and exercise; participating in organised leisure time activities was not

**Table 6.1** Time use (All age groups, except items marked with [a]) (%)

|  | Rarely or never | Less than once a week | Once or twice a week | Every day or almost |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Taking classes outside school time | 18.9 | 6.2 | 39.6 | 35.3 |
| Taking part in organized leisure time activities (like clubs and groups) | 35.0 | 7.7 | 35.8 | 21.5 |
| Reading for fun | 12.2 | 10.3 | 24.3 | 53.1 |
| Helping with housework | 8.5 | 12.1 | 29.4 | 50.0 |
| Doing homework | 1.4 | 1.4 | 4.2 | 93.0 |
| Watching TV | 4.4. | 4.9 | 18.0 | 72.7 |
| Playing sports or doing exercise | 11.6 | 8.7 | 31.2 | 48.5 |
| Using a computer | 7.1 | 8.6 | 20.7 | 63.6 |
| Just being by myself [a] | 14.0 | 12.0 | 26.5 | 47.5 |
| Taking care of brothers, sisters, other family members or people you live with [a] | 25.4 | 9.4 | 20.2 | 45.0 |

[a]*indicates questions only asked of 12-year-olds*

so common (Table 6.1). Gender differences reflect stereotypical gender roles, with boys spending more time on organised activities, sports and computers, while girls spend most of their time reading, helping with housework, doing homework and taking care of others (Fig. 6.1). Younger children spend more time reading for fun than older ones, while the 12 year olds spend more time doing homework, watching TV and on computers than younger ones. When asked how satisfied they are with their use of time, the great majority (80% and over) said they are satisfied (Tables 6.2 and 6.3). Girls are less satisfied than boys, while 12 year olds are less happy than 10 year olds, perhaps reflecting the pressure of schoolwork, homework and study at this age.

When compared to same age peers in 15 other countries which participated in the study, Maltese 8 year olds appear to be amongst the most sedentary and inactive children, being first on the list to
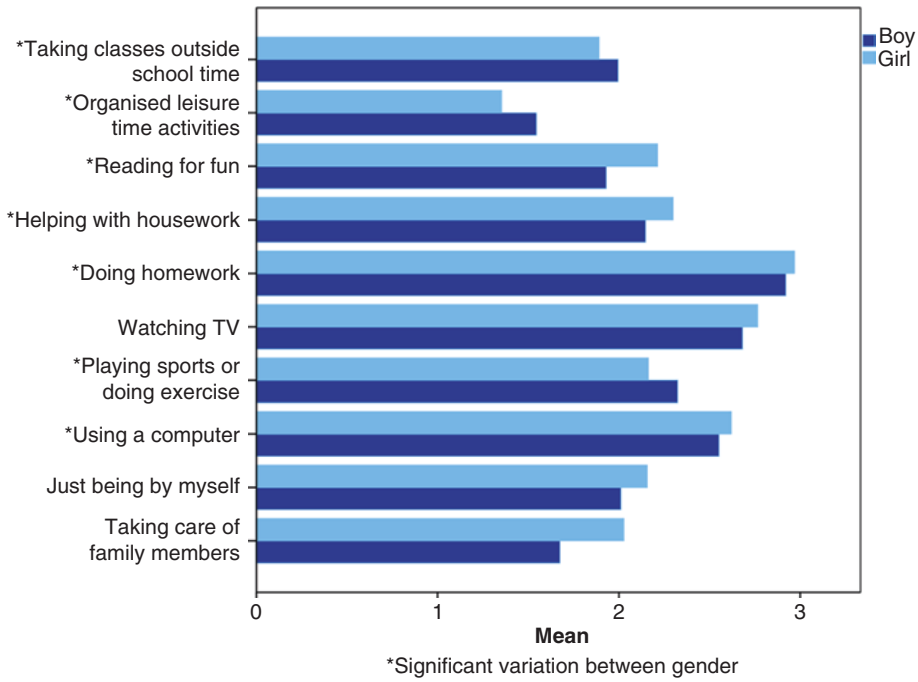
**Fig. 6.1**   Gender differences in time use (All age groups)

**Table 6.2**   Satisfaction with time use (8 year olds) (%)

|                              | 0   | 1   | 2   | 3    | 4    |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| What you do in your free time | 1.9 | 0.9 | 4.5 | 12.3 | 80.5 |

**Table 6.3**   Satisfaction with time use (10/12 year olds) (%)

|                              | 0   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8    | 9    | 10   |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|
| How you use your time        | 0.8 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 1.4 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 8.5 | 12.6 | 20.1 | 49.3 |
| What you do in your free time | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 4.9 | 8.5  | 17.8 | 62.7 |

spend most time on the computer, second in reading for fun and third in doing homework, while being almost at the bottom in sports and exercise (Rees et al. 2016). Similarly the older children (10/12 year olds) are ranked first in reading for fun and homework and second in computer, but twelfth in sports and exercise (Rees and Main 2015).

While the majority of participants feel safe in their area and believe that there are sufficient places to play or have a good time, more than one fourth expressed doubts about the adequacy of space they have for play and leisure time, while more than one in five expressed concern on the safety in the area they live in (Table 6.4). Female and younger participants appear to feel less safe than male and older participants respectively. One fourth of all participants are not satisfied with the outdoor areas children can use in their area, with boys and younger children being less satisfied**.** When asked how satisfied they are with people in their area, 72% of 8 year olds appear to be satisfied compared to about 80% of 10/12 year olds (Tables 6.5 and 6.6).

**Table 6.4** Views about local area (All age groups) (%)

| | I do not agree | Agree a little bit | Agree somewhat | Agree a lot | Totally agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time | 15.9 | 11.5 | 12.6 | 18.8 | 41.2 |
| I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in | 11.1 | 11.0 | 15.0 | 20.9 | 42.0 |

**Table 6.5** Satisfaction with local area (8 year olds) (%)

| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The outdoor areas children can use in your area | 7.4 | 6.0 | 12.1 | 18.6 | 55.9 |
| The area you live in general | 3.8 | 4.1 | 10.7 | 14.9 | 66.6 |
| The people in your area | 7.1 | 5.0 | 16.3 | 23.6 | 48.0 |

**Table 6.6** Satisfaction with local area (10/12 year olds) (%)

| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The outdoor areas children can use in your area | 7.5 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 3.1 | 7.7 | 5.5 | 7.3 | 10.3 | 15.2 | 37.4 |
| The area you live in general | 1.5 | 0.5 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 1.6 | 4.8 | 3.9 | 6.6 | 11.6 | 15.4 | 52.3 |
| The people in your area | 4.3 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 6.6 | 4.9 | 9.1 | 13.5 | 17.6 | 38.2 |

When compared to the other countries in the study, Maltese children feature quite low on their satisfaction with their local area. Eight year olds are the least satisfied with people in their area (16th place), amongst the least satisfied in there being enough places to play or have a good time in (14th place) and feeling safe in their area (12th place) (Rees et al. 2016). Ten and twelve year olds are somewhat more satisfied with their local area, being ranked higher than 8 year olds when compared with the other countries, though in some areas such as how safe they feel when walking in the area they live in and how satisfied they are with people in their area, they rank relatively low when compared with the other countries (Rees and Main 2015).

### 6.4.2 Qualitative Findings

The 8 year old participants said that free time is often spent with pets, reading, computer/tablets and playing at home with siblings or friends who live close by. Pets play a substantial part in their lives with many saying that they owned at least one pet. They also spent time playing outside, mostly with others, such as in the playing field, playing football, and riding the bike and scooter. They complained about dog waste on the pavements, impeding safe play there:

> I have a three months old puppy, I take care of him and teach him a lot of things.
> We play on the pavement outside our home.
> I am very disappointed because on the pavement there is dog waste, many times it happened

The middle school participants mentioned football and riding bikes, snooker, (boys), and listening to music and dancing (girls) as the main activities in which they spend their free time. The boys spent considerable time engaged in physical activities in contrast to the girls who spend most of the time in their own room or on the computer/tablet. As in the case of the younger participants, they underlined that there were few designated areas to meet with friends, as well as a tendency to staying indoors, particularly the girls:

> I would like to play outside but our street is dangerous... many cars (boy).
> We have a playing field like a small square, but as we are boys we prefer to play football (boy).
> I prefer to stay indoors, do not like playing outside (girl).
> I spent most of my free time in my bedroom (girl).

Both the young and older participants, expressed lack of trust in people in their area and the need to be cautious about strangers because of potential harm:

> You need to be careful…you may be mugged.
> There are many good people and many bad ones.
> You have to be careful which friends you make.
> You have to be careful about the bad influence of friends who make you do (bad) things.

## 6.5 Discussion and Conclusions

The survey data indicates that Maltese children spend most of their time on homework, television and computers, followed by helping with housework, reading for fun and sports and exercise. Boys spend more time on organised activities, sports and computers than girls, while girls spending more time reading, housework, homework and taking care of others. These gender differences, which are also apparent in the qualitative data, reflect stereotypical gender roles amongst Maltese children at a time where such roles are gradually being challenged. Older children become less active as they spend more time on homework, watching television and on the computer than younger ones, particularly the girls. While the great majority are satisfied with their use of time, girls are less satisfied than boys, possibly as a result of having to spend more time helping others than doing things they liked most. Twelve year olds are less happy than younger ones, also reflecting the pressure of homework and study at this age. According to the latest Health Behaviours in School-aged Children study, Maltese students aged 11–15 years old are the most pressured by school amongst 40 countries across Europe (Inchley et al. 2016), with pressure increasing significantly from 11 to 15 years, and with such pressure likely to spill over to home and free time in terms of homework, study and private tuition.

When compared to the 15 other countries in this study (Cefai and Galea 2016), Maltese children spend most time on the computer, reading for fun and doing homework, and least time in sports and exercise. Such an inactive lifestyle is set to have an impact on their quality of life both as children and adults later on, such as the very high rates of overweight and obesity in both children (Inchley et al. 2016) and adults in Malta (Cuschieri et al. 2016; Eurostat 2016). Childhood obesity is a serious health issue associated with both physical (cardiovascular, endocrine, pulminory, and gastrointestingal complications) and psychological health problems (low self esteem, anxiety and depression), both in the short and long term (Pulgaron 2013).

This study also found that the local area where children live, including play and socialising places, is an issue of concern for Maltese children. When compared to same age peers in the other countries, Maltese 8 year olds in particular are amongst the least satisfied with the area they live in, the places where they can play, and the people in their area. About one third expressed concerns about lack of sufficient place to play or have a good time, while one fifth do not feel totally safe to walk in their area, particularly girls and the younger children. Children from poorer social-economic background, are less satisfied with their local area (Cefai and Galea 2016). The qualitative data underlines these findings, with participants complaining of few designated areas for play and socialising and difficulties in playing in open spaces in their locality. In both survey and focus groups concern was also raised about the safety of the local areas for children and young people (fear of crime, traffic, strangers), with some children being constrained to stay inside. Confinement to closed spaces is negatively related to children's wellbeing and happiness (Solari and Mare 2012; Evans 2006). High density population, encroaching urbanisation and shrinking green areas and countryside, and increasing traffic (Malta is one of the worst and most dangerous country for cycling in the EU, Today Public Policy 2015), are some of the factors contributing to the lack of public spaces available for children to play, socialise and spend their leisure time.

Maltese children would like more child-friendly and safe public spaces in their own locality where they can socialise, play with their peers and engage in other leisure activities, such as

exercise and sports. These may include designated spaces such as playing fields, car free home zones, green areas and parks, sports centres, and cycle lanes. Such spaces may help them to find a more healthy balance between schoolwork, use of computer/social media/TV on one hand, and engaging in play, sports, physical exercise and organised activities, on the other. They need to be provided with systems and provisions which encourage them to spend less time on the former and more time on the latter. Children's use of leisure time and community space is a key aspect of their overall wellbeing and directly related to their quality of life. A balance also needs to be found between the focus on academic learning on one hand and social and emotional wellbeing, health and leisure time on the other (cf. Cefai and Cavioni 2014). Girls in particular may be given more freedom and choice on how to spend their time and encouraged to engage more in sports and physical exercise. On a more general note, the children's voices in this study may be construed also as message to adults to take more care of the environment, particularly in a small island state facing increasing urbanisation, traffic and noise and air pollution, and shrinking green areas and safe open spaces.

This study underlines the value of listening to what children think and feel about their use of leisure time and spaces and how these affect their quality of life and wellbeing. Their views underline the need for a healthier and safer environment, more accessible and child friendly open spaces, and a more balanced education, with more emphasis on health, exercise and wellbeing. Children thus need to be provided with more opportunity and space to air their views and concerns, including child-friendly measures which enable them to express their thoughts and feelings openly beyond adult structures which shape and direct children's thoughts and feelings (Fattore et al. 2014). This will help adults to design and provide more child-friendly systems and spaces which will make it possible for children and young people to have more quality leisure time which enhances their quality of life and wellbeing. Children and young people, however, need

also to be included in the design and provision of such spaces and systems for these to be effective in enhancing their quality of life and wellbeing.

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# Leisure Participation and Child Well-Being: The Role of Family Togetherness

Leena Haanpää and Piia af Ursin

**Abstract**

This study investigates the links between subjective well-being, family togetherness and leisure time in Finnish primary school children. We hypothesize that leisure time activity is related to perceived well-being and that family togetherness mediates this relationship. The present data are drawn from the International Survey of Children's Well-Being, Finnish data, which surveyed children between the ages of 8 and 12 in diverse contexts (N = 2840; boys 1381). The Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS) was applied to obtain children's own perception of their well-being. Family togetherness includes items assessing family functioning, whereas leisure participation is evaluated by frequency of activity. A structural equation model (SEM) was estimated based on ecological system's theory in order to discover relationships between the above mentioned three life domains. The model was confirmed which supports the use of ecological system's theory

and indicates that children's well-being is explained in terms of personal, relational and contextual factors.

## 7.1 Introduction

There is a growing concern of childhood becoming heavily organized and structured. The worry concerns especially children's leisure time – which has been argued to have become busier and achievement oriented, and at the same time, less unstructured or free-time based (Larson and Verma 1999; Wight et al. 2009). Scholars have indicated that joint time together with parents benefits child well-being. Parents' interactions with their children during joint activities create a sense of togetherness, which is crucial for child's psycho-social development. Sense of togetherness enhances cohesion and relationships and facilitates communication between family members (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Shaw and Dawson 2001; Bianchi et al. 2006; Offer 2013).

The time families share together brings the children an important break of everyday compulsory and scheduled routines, allowing them "respite from the frenzied world of peers and the demands of school" (Larson and Richards 1994, 99). Previous research has also provided a

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consistent report of a positive relationship between leisure involvement and life satisfaction (e.g. Riddick 1986; Zabriskie and McCormick 2003). Despite the growing interest in leisure, family life and indicators of well-being, relatively little is known about children's own perceptions of family togetherness and life satisfaction, or how these are associated with children's leisure time; i.e. how children's leisure activity influences subjective well-being (SWB) and how family togetherness is connected with this process.

This article draws from Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2016) ecological system's theory. The theory highlights the importance of recognizing the contexts in which children live and position themselves. Process-person-context-model (Bronfenbrenner 2016) takes simultaneously into account traits of both the process, the person and the environment, that is, the context relative to a person in process with other persons. Such important childhood contexts are family and school. While a growing number of research has focused on these two, leisure as one of the main childhood context has drawn less scholarly attention (Fletcher et al. 2003). We address in this article the relationship between child's (*person*) subjective well-being and leisure time (*context*). Of special interest is the mediating role of family togetherness (*process*) in this relationship.

## 7.2 Theoretical Framework: Contextual Model in Children's Well-Being Research

Researchers have increasingly emphasized the importance of context within child well-being in leisure research (e.g. Kim and Main 2017; Larson and Verma 1999). One of the most well known in terms of contextual and relational approach is the ecological systems theory of human development and socialization (Bronfenbrenner 1979). The applicability of developmental relational system theory lies in its

ability to explain firstly, social relationships and human dynamic systems to human development over the life span (Lerner 2002), and secondly, its ability to explain contextual (e.g. ethnicity, culture) settings' influence in development processes (Castellino et al. 1998). Children do not grow up in isolation but are in close relationship with their environments. An ecological, relationship-based model of children's subjective well-being provides a framework for assessing children's well-being in various cultural and environmental contexts.

In Finnish context, the theory has been applied especially in psychology and pedagogy (Härkönen 2008). A recent study showed that Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development and socialization is applicable also in studies related to well-being, as the model offers an approach of conceptualizing child subjective well-being (Kim and Main 2017).

In process-person-context-model Bronfenbrenner (2016) clarifies the ecological systems theory of human development and socialization by indicating with some concrete examples about mother-child relationship how significant the context is for child development. He not only indicates the importance of recognizing cumulative – favourable or unfavourable- effects within processes between a person and the environment but underlines the joint effects of different environments in which persons act. The model helps to understand the synergy effects of these three factors: it is not only children's personal characteristics (e.g. musicality) that regulate leisure participation activity, nor socio-demographic background (e.g. economic factors) or family socialization process (parent's own musicality) but the joint function of these three.

The process-person-context-model bases in four concentric systems; micro, meso, exo, and macro systems. The first, microsystem refers to all the structures close to the child including home and family, neighborhood, school, and peers. According to Christensen (2016), there are bi-directional influences in the microsystem level

between children and their contexts. That is, parents may influence a child's behavior but a child may also influence parent's behavior. For example, a child's physical activity in his/her leisure time may result from parental physically active behavior. However, according to the theory, this influence works also on the other way around; child's physical activity may transfer to parent's behavior. Numerous applications of Bronfenbrenner's theory have led to various different models. Microsystem may refer to home, school, or even human body environment (Härkönen 2008; Tonttila 2006). Microsystem may be understood as an internal system in human body consisting of emotional and cognitive systems (Christensen 2016; Härkönen 2008). That includes human well-being, indicated by life satisfaction, mental health and self-image (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Newland et al. 2014; Kim and Main 2017).

The second is called mesosystem, comprised of the person's connections and processes related to two or more environments (e.g. home and school). Mesosystems have been explained to pertain of the relationships that form a child's contextual microenvironments (e.g. relationships between the school and home, Saarinen et al. 1994). In the third, exosystem, a child's development is not directly influenced by the system, but it merely refers to an indirect influence. All the environments that support education are included in the exosystem (Puroila and Karila 2001). Macrosystem, the last of the original theory, can be understood as a large cultural system (e.g. the Western culture). It is an all-embracing formulation of micro-, meso, and exosystems (Bronfenbrenner 2016).

Additional to the above described four dimensions, Bronfenbrenner have added a fifth, time-related system, which he called chronosystem. This time change aspect describes the evolution of the external systems over time (Bronfenbrenner 2016; McBride Murry et al. 2015). This fifth addition applies especially to such empirical studies that involve longitudinal data, and describe change, development, or life course for example. In this expanded model individuals are seen as active, participatory agents.

## 7.3    Leisure Time: Developmental Time or Wasted Opportunities?

Bronfenbrenner (1979) has argued that some leisure time activities and social contexts represent distinct opportunities for psychological growth. From an economist point of view, the quantities of time children devote to different kinds of practices in their leisure time, can be regarded as human capital resource (Sweetland 1996). This implies especially to time devoted to increase academic performance that create opportunities later in career and employment. However, as Larson and Verma (1999) point out, childhood is not just a period of gaining skills needed in work life of adulthood, but it should be understood equally as an opportunity for developing intrinsic emotional-motivational experiences –if not even more important later in life than a purely capital resource. These social and cultural forms of capital (see more of the forms of capital in Bourdieu 1986) develop children's broader life skills, such as social competence and dispositions related to healthy emotional adjustment, when children spent their time economic sense in nonproductive activities (Larson and Verma 1999). Equal to above cited authors, we consider children's leisure time as a context for developing social, educational and emotional competencies in the present study.

Children's leisure time can, thus, be considered as a context for developing social and emotional competencies. Play, talk, and interactions with family members and friends are seen to be among the most important contexts of learning social and emotional competencies. Depending on the context that a child is active in develops his/her skills in that very context. That is, helping in household chore increases participant's contextual knowledge of equipment and abilities required in cleaning or other household matters. Accordingly, participation in sports furthers both physical and psycho-social capabilities, while (leisure) time spent with family members increases socialization experiences and feelings of togetherness (Larson and Verma 1999; Offer 2013). It should be beard in mind, after all, that

children are unique personalities and the experiences in a given context vary from child to child influenced by the personal characteristics, age, gender, and also their willingness to participate (Larson and Verma 1999).

Previous research has shown some consistencies regarding children's behavioural patterns, which makes it possible to compare leisure time activities in a national child population. Girls tend to spend more time with their family (Larson and Verma 1999; Wight et al. 2009), help in routine household chore and also do more shopping with their parents than boys (Hilbrecht et al. 2008; Haanpää and Roos 2015).

Scholars have argued, however, that remarkable cultural differences separate societies when it comes to children's possibilities to decide on how to spend free-time (Larson and Verma 1999). In non-industrial populations boys spend almost double of their waking hours free when compared to girls, who's waking hours are spent more on helping in different household maintenance work. In Finland, boys and girls have equal opportunities to decide how to spend the free time. Gender differences characterize free-time activities: girls use clearly more libraries (weekly 14%) and read more than boys (5%). The majority of the girls (73%) spend time weekly with creative hobbies like theatre or writing (boys 42%, Haanpää and Roos 2015).

On the other hand, differences in children's leisure activities have been documented also between societies of different industrialization stages. Perhaps the most characterizing difference is related to the Western and the East Asian cultures. Children in the Western industrialized countries can typically decide themselves how to use their free time, while in East Asian countries, a cultural pressure guides children – especially in higher grades – to devote much of their leisure doing homework and develop their academic performance (Larson and Verma 1999; Larson and Richards 1998). Larson and Verma (1999) have shown in their extensive meta-analysis that daily socialization and developmental opportunities vary greatly between the Western and East Asian cultures.

Compared to previous decades, children of today spend more time together with their parents than before (Bianchi et al. 2006). The time spent together with the parents, however, decreases as the children grow older and spend more time with peers (Larson et al. 2001). It is known that the time families spent together is beneficial for family functioning and children's well-being. Most of the family time is also spent in joint leisure activities which has been found to be positively associated with child emotional well-being (Snyder 2007; Offer 2013). Regarding child well-being, the quality of joint activities has been proven of special importance compared to the sheer amount of time spent together (Snyder 2007).

## 7.4 Family Togetherness

Family togetherness is a commonly used term in everyday language (Ribbens McCarthy 2012). In Finland, an emphasis on family 'togetherness' has strikingly increased during the twenty-first century (Jallinoja 2008). Previous research has pointed out that as a term, family togetherness reflects different emotional connotations varying from closeness that family members share in doing things together and pulling or sticking together (see Ribbens McCarthy 2012 for a more extensive review of the term). In everyday language togetherness connects also to leisure as Shaw (2008) in her study on leisure activities has shown: "Many parents… place emphasis on… children learning about 'the family' as a value and the importance of family togetherness. In this sense, the purpose of family leisure is not simply something that is done for the sake of the children and/or to enhance child development, but also for the sake of the family as a whole and for shared family ideas and family cohesion… Family leisure is seen as a way to 'cement' relationships and ensure the stability of the family unit" (Shaw 2008: 6–9).

In this study, we call family togetherness broadly as *containing the idea of family members sharing a common sense of belonging, being or doing together, reflecting closeness of family members*.

## 7.5 Aims of the Study

This study examines the associations between leisure participation, children's global life satisfaction and family togetherness. In doing so weaddress to an important research field by proposing a SEM-model of family togetherness and leisure time in terms of life satisfaction.

Using SEM, we estimate the relations between leisure participation and life satisfaction. Based on the findings of earlier studies, we implement a theoretical model to form the basis for statistical examination. The hypothesized model is depicted in Fig. 7.1.

We hypothesize a positive association between leisure participation and life satisfaction (higher leisure activity, higher life satisfaction), as well as between family togetherness and life satisfaction (more family time, higher life satisfaction). We posit also that there will be a positive association between family togetherness and leisure participation (more family time, higher leisure activity). Gender and age of the child are controlled, as those are often found to explain life satisfaction. When comparing genders, girls are usually less satisfied with their lives than boys (Klocke et al. 2014; Rees et al. 2010; Haanpää and Roos 2015). Children's life satisfaction also varies by age. Life satisfaction decreases along with age, especially between childhood and adolescence (Goswami 2012; Klocke et al. 2014).

## 7.6 Method

### 7.6.1 Study Population and Setting

This study is part of the International Survey of Children's Well-Being (ISCWeb) (www.isciweb.org; Rees 2017). The Ethics Committee of the University of Turku has approved the sub study conducted in Finland in a statement obtained 15.2.2016. Cross-sectional data collected in Finland were used, comprising randomly selected, nationally representative data from 43 primary schools. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the survey. Finally, in each school at least 40 pupils from every grade were recruited. In total, 2840 pupils (67.6% response rate, mean age 10 years) completed an online anonymous questionnaire.

### 7.6.2 Life Satisfaction

In Finland, children and youngsters evaluate typically their well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction very high (Haanpää and Roos 2015; Kuula et al. 2017). This holds true especially in context of cognitive aspects, that is, global and domain-specific life satisfaction (Diener et al. 1985; Huebner 1991; Dinisman and Ben-Arieh 2015). Life satisfaction, "a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his [sic] chosen criteria" (Shin and Johnson 1978) is one dimension of subjective well-being (Huebner 1991). We used five manifest variables for the latent variable of life satisfaction, adapted from the SLSS, which was originally a seven-item self-report scale intended to assess students' life satisfaction at a global level (Huebner 1991). In

**Fig. 7.1** The proposed SEM model of direct effects of family togetherness and leisure on life satisfaction
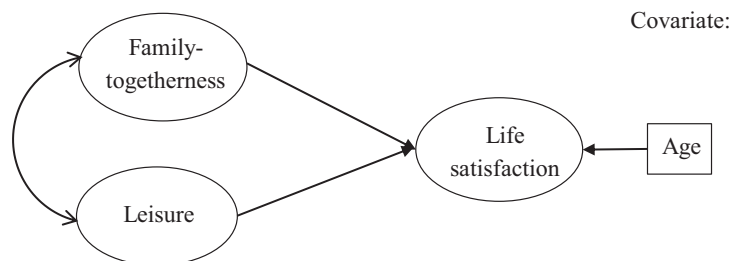
this study, we used a reduced version of the SLSS. According to Rees et al. (2010), two of the seven items could be left out without changes in scale reliability (Rees et al. 2010). Thus, we asked the children in our study to ponder five life satisfaction items: my life is going well, my life is just right, I have a good life, I have what I want in life, and the things in my life are excellent. A 5-point scale ranging from 0 (not agree) to 4 (agree a lot) was applied with the 8-year-old children, while 10- and 12-year-old children's scale ranged between 0 and 10. In the final data this scale was recoded equal to the 8-year-olds' scale. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was high and ranged depending on the age from .891 (8-years) to .942 (12-years).

### 7.6.3   Leisure Participation

The scale for leisure participation included six items measuring active and non-active leisure. These physically or mentally active discretionary activities varied from participation in voluntary organizations to helping with housework, and were measured by asking the children how often they spent time in the following activities: taking classes outside school time, reading for fun, helping with housework, doing homework, watching TV. Activity in leisure participation was measured on a 4-point scale ranging between 0 (rarely or never) and 3 (every day or almost every day). The α coefficient ranged from .430 (12-years) to .482 (8-years) showing a modest internal consistency. Only four items (housework, reading, homework, and sports) were accpeted in the final model.

### 7.6.4   Family Togetherness

Family togetherness was formed of three items which measured the time families spent together doing different kinds of things: talked together, had fun together, and learned together. The 4-point scale ranged from 0 (not at all) to 3 (every day). The α coefficient varied from .680 (8-years) to .779 (12-years) indicating an adequate internal consistency.

### 7.6.5   Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses were carried out using Mplus7 (Muthén and Muthén, n.d.) and SPSS 24 (IBM Corp. Armonk, NY, USA) and p-values below 0.05 were considered statistically significant. Non-parametric (Kruskal-Wallis) test for independent samples was applied in comparisons because of the non-normality distribution of the outcome variable of subjective well-being. Initial analyses employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate whether students' responses conformed the hypothesised factors and thus, indicated construct validity for the applied measurement model. The hypothesized model (Fig. 7.1) was tested using structural equation modelling. The age was controlled as a covariate, while gender was left out of the final model due to a non-statistically significant association with the SLSS in the initial tests. Due to a non-normal distribution of the SLSS items we used a robust maximum likelihood estimation. The fit of the model was evaluated by Chi-square test statistic and fit indices including the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). The following cut-off values were used: RMSEA and SRMR values below .08, and TLI and CFI values close to or over .95 indicate acceptable and well-fitting model (Hu and Bentler 1999). A small amount of missing data was handled with the Expectation Maximization (EM) algorithm.

### 7.7   Results

Most of the children scored high on the life satisfaction scale. In line with previous research, the younger respondents (aged 8) felt on average more satisfied with their lives than the older ones. Measured as a corrected mean ranks based on non-parametric analysis, the difference between age groups showed a moderate practical significance (ES$r$= .25). Gender was not associated with students' perception of life satisfaction (Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1** Descriptive statistics of the sample

|  | N | % | SLSS mean (SD) | SLSS mean Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender (ns) | Boy (n = 1376) | 48.6 | 3.1 (0.8) | 1465.2 |
|  | Girl (n = 1464) | 51.4 | 3.2 (0.9) | 1508.2 |
| Age*** | 8 years (n = 893) | 31.4 | 3.2 (0.9) | 1547.7 |
|  | 10 years (n = 945) | 33.3 | 3.2 (0.8) | 1510.9 |
|  | 12 years (n = 1002) | 35.3 | 3.1 (0.8) | 1412.1 |

***$p < 0.001$; (ns) $p > 0.05$



**Fig. 7.2** SEM results of the path model. The values are reported as standardized coefficients
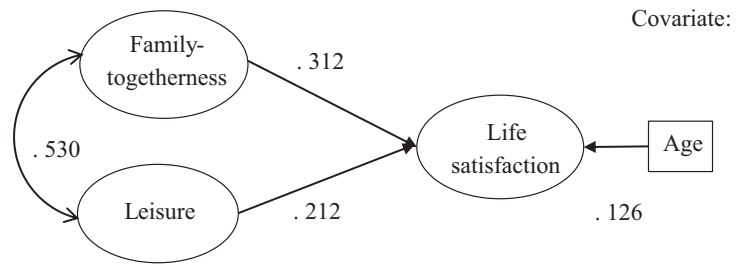
Next, we monitored to patterns of intercorrelations to scrutinize the relationships between model items. As expected, moderate or strong correlations were found between most of the items, except for gender. Exceptions for this general tendency were discovered, as negative -although low- correlations with leisure activity of reading for fun and the items of life satisfaction were found (Table 7.2).

Distributional properties for the central study items are presented in Table 7.2. Before estimation of the final model, we examined measurement models for each continuous latent factor (3) using CFA. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) verified that the hypothesized factors were measured by discrete, single latent variables. The three factors were allowed to inter-correlate and the errors were expected to be uncorrelated. The standardized loadings ranged from .356 to .918 and were all statistically significant at the p < .001 level. The three factors provided acceptable fit for the data without any modifications ($\chi^2$ = 168.608 [50], p < .001, RMSEA = .029, CFI = .981, TLI = .975, SRMR = .029).

We estimated the final SEM using three latent factors (SLSS, family togetherness, leisure participation) while controlling age. The tested theoretical model provided a good fit to the data. Although the chi-square statistic was significant, regarding other fit indices, the model represented an adequate fit ($\chi^2$ = 433.310 [61], p < .001, RMSEA = .046, CFI = .947, TLI = .933, SRMR = .041). Standardized coefficients are reported in Fig. 7.2.

Figure 7.2 shows that all the predicted links between the tested latent indicators were confirmed, and the anticipated direct associations with SLSS established. The reported regression coefficients were significant at a p-value of less than 0.001. Similar result was obtained by Kim and Main (2017). Latent structures of family togetherness, leisure participation, and age explained a significant proportion of children's perceived life satisfaction: 23 % of the variance.

As hypothesized, a positive association ($\beta$ = .212) was found between leisure participation and life satisfaction indicating that those children who participate actively in different leisure activities perceive their life satisfaction higher compared to children non-active during their free-time. Similarly, the hypothesized direct link between family togetherness and life satisfaction existed ($\beta$ = .312) showing that time spent together leads to children's greater subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Specifically, family togetherness ($\beta$ = .530) was strongly associated with leisure participation suggesting that

**Table 7.2** Bivariate correlations of study items

| Bivariate correlations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My life is going well | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| My life is just right | .962*** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| My life is a good life | .965*** | .966*** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I have what I want in life | .919*** | .917*** | .927*** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| The things in my life are excellent | .949*** | .943*** | .958*** | .924*** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Family talk together | .180*** | .175*** | .202*** | .178*** | .199*** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Family have fun together | .075*** | .069*** | .085*** | .065*** | .105*** | .396*** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Family learn together | .095*** | .090*** | .103*** | .096*** | .123*** | .373*** | .593*** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Taking classes outside school time | .139*** | .137*** | .139*** | .144*** | .140*** | .130*** | .130*** | .138*** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Reading for fun | −.067*** | −.085*** | −.061** | −.042* | −.044* | .136*** | .211*** | .183*** | .136*** | 1 | | | | | | |
| Helping with housework | .198*** | .182*** | .184*** | .190*** | .191*** | .156*** | .168*** | .231*** | .108*** | .250** | 1 | | | | | |
| Doing homework | .073*** | .085*** | .086*** | .079*** | .094*** | .136*** | .057** | .091** | .100*** | .159*** | .176*** | 1 | | | | |
| Watching TV | .041* | .054*** | .050*** | 0.035 | .049* | .085*** | .050* | .075** | .078*** | 0.013 | 0.015 | .155*** | 1 | | | |
| Playing sports or doing exercise | .110*** | .096*** | .113*** | .096*** | .126*** | .132*** | .183*** | .189*** | .251*** | .134*** | .202*** | .196*** | .202** | 1 | | |
| Age class | .757*** | .750** | .752*** | .754*** | .711*** | .071** | −.102** | −.082** | .057** | −.202*** | .136*** | 0.022 | −0.033 | −0.001 | 1 | |
| Boy or girl | −0.004 | −0.024 | −0.014 | 0.019 | −0.006 | .097** | 0.024 | −0.022 | 0.027 | .142*** | .094*** | .079** | −.068*** | −0.019 | −0.002 | 1 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

the more families spend time together, the higher is children's leisure activity. A significant association with the age covariate and life satisfaction existed. Interestingly, older children were associated with higher perceived life satisfaction.

## 7.8 Discussion

This article has presented the very first findings from Finnish sub data of the Children's Worlds study. The study was conducted to children aged 8–12 years. We applied in this article Bronfenbrenner's (2016) person-process-context-model to examine the relationships between child (*person*) subjective well-being, leisure time (*context*) family togetherness (*process*). The results of this study shows that Finnish children are generally speaking very happy with their lives in all the age groups showing, however surprisingly, an ascending trend as the children grow older. This may result partly from the differences in the measurement scales. On the other hand, eight-year-old children's absract thingking may still be more limited in comparison to older kids as it comes to evaluating their own life satisfaction. That is, it may be affected by their momentary feelings, for example, one negative experience may turn the overall experience of life satisfaction into a negative direction. Also in an international context Finland tend to rank among the highest countries in terms of child SWB (Rees 2017). While age sorted out well-being and life satisfaction, gender had no effect. According to the results, both boys and girls are equally satisfied with their lives.

Children's daily lives are characterized by various socialization, emotional and developmental practices which form a context for growth in childhood. The results of this study confirm the important role of these contexts to child well-being. Firstly, greater amounts of time spent in different leisure activities is associated with higher life satisfaction. It follows that the more children spend time in various leisure contexts, the more it increases their absorption of different skills, knowledge, and experiences associated with the particular leisure activity, e.g. physical and social skills learned in sports or cultural capital gained with reading. Children's time on these different free-time activities has clearly positive benefits for both the individual and according to scholars also to the whole society (Larson and Verma 1999).

Based on our study findings family time is important, as it directly effects child well-being. The time spend together doing things that are fun, and talking and learning together increases sense of belonging and togetherness (Ribbens McCarthy 2012). Furthermore, family togetherness, as strongly correlated with leisure participation, can be regarded as a process which according to Bronfenbrenner (2016), alter as a joint function of a person and the environment and thus allows observation of synergy effects. The data utilized in this study is not longitudinal which do not allow more profound analysis on the mechanisms related to the person-process-context-model. However, we can argue that family togetherness creates synergy effects in two ways: it creates well-being for young children and also works as a socialization context. Similarly as with leisure participation, also these different activities that families do jointly increase children's social, emotional and academic skills and teach them to actively spend their free-time.

Overall, the results of this study are in line with previous research stressing the role of family joint time. Spending time together is beneficial for child's SWB, this was confirmed by a positive effect ($\beta = .312$, $p < .001$) in our study. Perhaps the most important result of this study is that despite the amount of time families spend together, the time children allocate in leisure activities *per se* is associated with their well-being. In another words, children who experience lack of family togetherness nonetheless benefit of active participation in hobbies. Having things to do -both organized and unorganized- creates a valuable developmental context for children's growth. In this study, we did not separately focus on the nature of the family time, that is, whether family time consists of routine based, daily activities (e.g. family meals) or quality time (e.g. visit to zoo) organized around children's needs and interests (Offer 2013) which evidently are important fields of research. Instead, the items that formed the latent variable of family togetherness

contained elements of both. Similarly, items that measured children's frequency on leisure participation were not divided into organised (structured) and unorganized (unstructured) activities. Future research would benefit from a study design taking into account these issues. Another aspect for future research would be the inclusion of an international data that brought a cultural context, in Bronfenbrennerian thinking (1979) a macrosystem dimension for the study design.

### 7.8.1 Limitations

There are several study limitations to be considered. The research focus was on children's own perception of life-satisfaction, nevertheless, this is unavoidable if we want to asses information of subjective experiences (Alliger and Williams 1993). Secondly, the questionnaire was administered only to the children, not to parents, which means that experiences of family time was exclusively considered from child's own point of view. In this study setting it was not possible to evaluate the bi-directional influences in microsystems.

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# Occupations and Well-Being in Children and Youth

**8**

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**Abstract**

Children are occupational beings and as such are born with an innate desire to experience learning, control, and mastery. This intrinsic motivation and ability to engage in occupations or everyday life activities is what establishes purpose and fulfillment, enables physical and emotional health and well-being, organizes behavior, and improves quality of life. In childhood, these occupations include education, play and leisure, social participation, activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), rest and sleep, and work. Development and competence in these areas as children and youth influence success, interests, and values in adult occupations.

Along a developmental continuum, childhood occupations affect skill acquisition and in turn serve as the source by which skills develop, creating a bidirectional and complex relationship. Areas of developmental progression include sensory, motor, socio-emotional and cognitive process abilities. Well-being and health of children and youthisinfluenced-bydevelopmentalcapacities, the ability to participate inoccupations, and multiple contextual factors, including the social and physical environments in which these occupations occur.

This chapter aims to explore the occupations of children and youth and discuss how engagement in these occupations relates to and affects health, development, and well-being.

## 8.1 What is Occupation?

Participation in occupations, the daily activities that occupy our time, fosters health and well-being, contributes to competence and self-worth, and provides the context in which we form social relationships (AOTA 2014; King et al. 2003; Meyer 1922; Wilcock 2006; Yerxa 1998). The term occupation is much more encompassing and complex than a reference to vocation or work; it is the "activity in which one engages" or the "principal business of one's life" (Merriam-Webster n.d.). Occupations are what link our lives to meaning, providing a sense of wholeness, fulfillment and personal authenticity (Crabtree 1998). These multifaceted constructs are what facilitate performance, accomplishment, self-maintenance and identity formation; occupations are what provide purpose, a reason for existence (Crabtree 1998; Law 2002; Peloquin 1997). Meaningfulness and occupational choice arise

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from our roles and goals. Goals for the future provide rewards and guide behavior and action as well as build a sense of hope and purpose (Ikiugu et al. 2015; Krause 2004).

An understanding of occupations and their impact on health, development and quality of life allows us to recognize their relation to childhood well-being and wellness. The occupations of childhood – play, leisure, school, activities of daily living – include both unstructured and structured, informal and formal activities (King et al. 2003; Law 2002). Informal or unstructured activities are often self-initiated and do not require prior planning (King et al. 2003); these include everyday occupations, such as putting on shoes and brushing teeth. Formal activities, in contrast, have structure, rules and a designated leader or instructor (King et al. 2003); formal occupations include skilled tasks, such as a collegiate athlete playing softball or an adolescent participating in a weekly church group. It is understood then, that occupations and their meanings are individualized and unique, specific to a person and his or her context. Context includes physical and social environments as well as personal, temporal and virtual features (AOTA 2015). What one person does every day differs in performance and meaning when compared to another person, even in the same occupation. For example, one child might wake up early so that he can share a bowl of his favorite cereal with his mother before work and school, whereas another child might wake up just in time to grab a piece of toast on his way out the door. Though both engage in an everyday activity of eating breakfast, the contexts are very different, and thus associated meaningfulness of the occupations are also very different.

Participation in these formal and informal activities is what promotes skill development, competence, connection with others, and thus life satisfaction as they lead to engagement (Kielhofner and Burke 1980; McIntyre and Howie 2002; Yerxa 1998; Wilcock 2006). Occupations give life meaning: "*doing* purposeful activities, *performing* life roles and tasks, *adapting* to the environment, *adjusting* to disability, and *achieving* skills or mastery" (Peloquin 1997, p. 167),

and all of this happens through a dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment (Lawlor 2003). This environment includes the social context in which activities occur. As stated, occupations promote social connectedness and lead to engagement. Thus, when considering the activity, one must understand the *doing* as well as the *doing with*, considering the occupation within the context of social constructs (Lawlor 2003). To further account for the importance of this environmental component of social context and construct, Yerxa (1998) defines occupations as "self-initiated, self-directed activity that is productive for the person (even if the product is fun) and contributes to others" (p.1).

Occupations are important across the lifespan, beginning at birth and continuing through the end of life. These occupations, in concert with development, interests, skills and contexts are ever-evolving and ever-changing across the lifespan. Childhood occupations and participation impact choice and participation in adult occupations, influence competence throughout the lifespan as well as contribute to continued quality of life during the aging process. Childhood occupations are intrinsically motivating, personally and socially relevant, arouse curiosity and lead to development (Yerxa 1998), and as such, they impact health and well-being.

## 8.2 Occupation and Health

Occupations, now understood as the basic tenets of everyday life, facilitate meaning; engagement and participation in occupations enables health and well-being (AOTA 2014). As also now understood, occupations are context-specific; thus, health is also impacted by context, including the physical and social environments in which occupations occur (Basak 2012). Activities and occupations are critical to health and well-being, and participation in these is fundamental to healthy development (Chantry and Dunford 2010). "Humans are occupational beings who require constant engagement in activity to maintain health" (Gutman and Schindler 2007). Health includes physical, social and mental well-being,

good quality of life, and life satisfaction with activities and occupations; health is more than simply the absence of disease (Wilcock 2006).

How exactly does engagement in activities impact health? One explanation of this is related to the concept of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). Flow is the result or product of engagement in highly-desired activities. It is the idea of complete enthrallment, a sense of oneness, total immersion, loss of anxiety, and engrossed satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Gutman and Schindler 2007). Flow happens without conscious effort; in fact, it is just the opposite of that. It is the experience of unconscious fixation, absorption, and captivation. Imagine a child sitting to work on a puzzle, playing a game of football, decorating a cake, or playing the piano, and getting so lost in the activity that suddenly hours have passed without realizing. This is the idea of flow (Images 8.1 and 8.2).

Through flow the brain responds positively by activation of the reward and dopamine pathways. Flow activities promote relaxation as well as mental stimulation, both of which preserve physical and emotional health by decreasing stress and thus stress-related health concerns (Gutman and Schindler 2007). Flow, unconscious occupational engagement, works to enhance musculoskeletal and cardiovascular function (Gutman and Schindler 2007) as well as preserve cognitive function by stimulating thinking, problem solving and executive functions.

Along with fostering flow and activation of the body's reward system, occupational participation and engagement promotes health through enhancement of success, independence and social involvement (Heah et al. 2007). Health promotion happens through occupations enabling adaptation, engagement and joy. As such, there are two areas that must be considered when relating occupations to health: opportunities for engagement and successful performance in engagement. A child who is not presented with opportunities to participate, may experience occupational deprivation and health decline, or if the occupations are below the child's skill level, the child is likely to experience feelings of boredom and decreased engagement.





**Images 8.1 and 8.2**  (Feldhacker 2017) Engagement in occupations, such as painting and playing piano, stimulate a sense of flow, promote competence, enhance skill development, and improve overall quality of life, health and well-being

Conversely, a child presented with opportunities to engage in occupations which are above his or her skill level, is likely to experience feelings of incompetence and frustration.

Successful performance and opportunities for participation lead to a sense of competence, achievement and satisfaction (Kielhofner and Burke 1980; Yerxa 1998; Wilcock 2006), allowing children to fulfill their occupational roles, develop identity, and connect with others. This results in positive physical health and emotional well-being (Chantry and Dunford 2010; Rodger and Brown 2006). Participation means having fun, feeling valuable, doing things independently and being with others (Heah et al. 2007). Occupations allow children to achieve social and emotional well-being through building enjoyment, developing social relationships and enhancing skills, which leads to overall health maintenance and improvement (Hoogsteen and Woodgate 2010; King et al. 2003; Law 2002; Law et al. 2004; Murphy et al. 2008). The level and quality of a child's social participation as well as associated contextual factors are the key determinants of a child's psycho-emotional well-being and development (Vilaysack et al. 2016).

Children are interested in partaking in occupations due to the promotion of social engagement and being with others, provision of a sense of inclusion, choice, and control, and thus, independence in a social setting (Hoogsteen and Woodgate 2010). A combination of all of these factors link occupations to enhanced quality of life. This engagement promotes skill acquisition, meaning making, social well-being, development of social skills and relationships, refinement of other physical and cognitive skills, and independence. Occupations allow children to form goals and values (Hoogsteen and Woodgate 2010). All of these skills demonstrate how occupations work to improve physical and emotional health and well-being. Health is a balance between the child's goals and expectations and his or her adaptive response which facilitates successful engagement through doing, being and becoming (Wilcock 2006).

Along with promotion of flow and neurological reward, and enhancement of social, cognitive and emotional health, occupational participation impacts physical health. Use of body structures and functions during occupational tasks and activities improves the various systems involved, especially cardiovascular, respiratory and musculoskeletal (Hoogsteen and Woodgate 2010). Physical activity, at varying levels, is inherently a part of active occupational engagement, whereas passive activities likely do not promote physical health (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). Opportunities for active participation in tasks within a community environment are the most important contributors to health and well-being, including physical health and well-being, of children and youth (Law et al. 2004; Ziviani et al. 2004).

Just as participation in meaningful occupations has been shown to improve overall health and well-being, the inverse of this is also true: lack of participation and occupational deprivation leads to poor health and well-being (Law 2002). Activity and participation limitations diminish childhood and adult health and well-being (Steultjens 2004; Ziviani et al. 2004). A lack of role fulfillment and lack of organized activities and occupations, including leisure and recreational activities, causes an increase in depression, a loss of identity, and a decline in health (Yerxa 1998). Thus, occupational beings have the opportunity to influence health as long as they possess the skills (Yerxa 1998) and have been given the opportunity, through context and activities, to do occupations. Diminished occupational participation is linked to decreased physical, social, emotional and mental health and development (Pizzi 2016; Pizzi and Vroman 2013; Ziviani et al. 2004). Overall, lack of occupations leads to lack of habits which in turn affects performance and leads to social isolation; social isolation as a result has adverse effects on physical and mental health (Mandich and Rodger 2006; Vilaysack et al. 2016).

This impact on health and development affects the trajectory from childhood to adulthood. There is a significant link between childhood and adult health (Biro and Wien 2010; Heah et al. 2007; Hertzman and Wiens 1996; Pizzi 2016; Ziviani et al. 2004). A study by Kinney and Coyle (1992) showed that participation in childhood occupations predicts future life satisfaction. Studies of
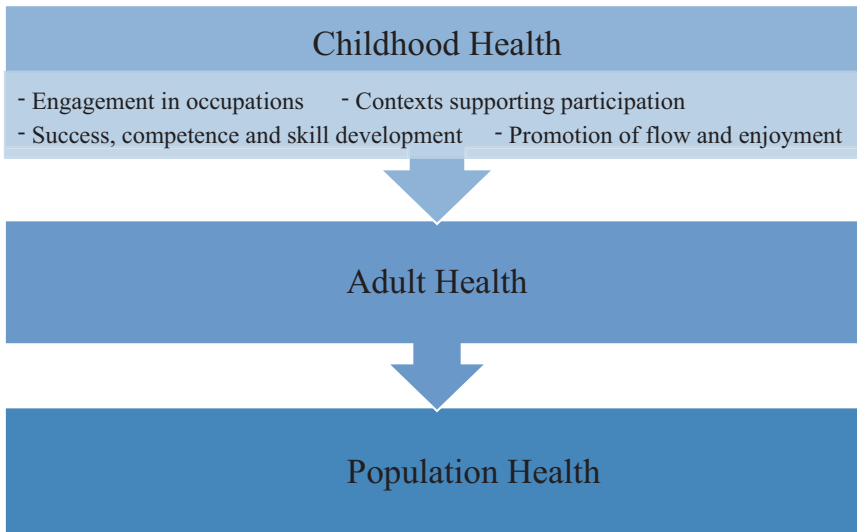
**Fig. 8.1**   Occupations are the core of childhood health. Childhood health leads to and determines adult health, and as such determines population health

long-term outcomes have identified a link between childhood development and population health, especially in relation to socio-emotional and cognitive development (D'Onise et al. 2010; Hertzman and Wiens 1996; Teutsch and Fielding 2011; Thorton et al. 2016). As a result we can see a domino effect of how occupations are at the core of population health: Population health cannot be separated from childhood health and well-being, childhood health and well-being cannot be separated from engagement in childhood occupations, and childhood occupations cannot be separated from the physical and social contexts in which they occur (Fig. 8.1).

## 8.3   Occupations of Childhood

As we have gained a better understanding of the basic principles of occupations, contexts, and health, what then are the occupations of childhood? We now know that occupations of childhood contribute to childhood development, childhood well-being and thus population health. As we consider the occupations of childhood, we must also delve into the roles, activities and

routines typical of children and youth, as the chosen and assigned roles and routines often dictate which activities occupy time.

Roles and routines, just as occupations, are context-specific and as such are dependent upon environmental, personal, social and cultural factors, such as demographics, ethnicity, education, income, living arrangements, etc. Typical roles of children and youth include student, peer, sibling, teammate, family member, and friend. As children work to fulfill these roles, their occupations continue to promote meaning, self-expression, engagement, and identity creation (Chantry and Dunford 2010). Doing activities and engaging in occupations, develops skills, leads to success, and promotes positive self-esteem and self-efficacy (Mandich and Rodger 2006).

Exploring the World Health Organization's (WHO 2007) *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health: Children & Youth Version* (ICF-CV) builds the foundation of a unified language to describe occupations of children and youth as well as standards for children's health. The ICF-CV consists of three overarching domains: (1) body functions and structures, (2) activities and participation, and

**Table 8.1** International classification of functioning: children and youth

| Activities and participation | Examples |
|---|---|
| Learning and applying knowledge | Purposeful sensory experiences |
| | Basic learning and acquiring skills |
| | Applying knowledge: attention and problem solving |
| General task and demands | Behaviors |
| | Carrying out daily routine |
| Communication | Receptive and expressive language |
| Mobility | Changing position |
| | Handling and carrying objects |
| | Walking and moving |
| Self-care | Washing |
| | Caring for the body |
| | Toileting |
| | Dressing |
| | Eating |
| | Drinking |
| | Looking after health and safety |
| Domestic life | Household tasks |

*Note:* Adapted from the *International classification of functioning, disability and health: Children and youth version* (WHO 2007)

(3) environmental factors. Body functions include mental, sensory and pain, voice and speech, cardiovascular, hematological, immunological, respiratory, digestive, metabolic, endocrine, genitourinary, reproductive, neuromusculoskeletal, movement-related, and skin functions (WHO 2007); body structures include all anatomical structures involved in each of the areas of body function. These body functions and structures can impact the second area of the domain: activities and participation. Activities are the specific tasks, and participation is involvement in life situations. Each of these areas of the domain helps to assess child function and health (WHO 2007).

Along with defining health and allowing a universal language for communication, the areas of activities and participation also lays the foundation for understanding the occupations typical of children and youth. Activities and participation include learning and applying knowledge, general task and demands, communication, mobility,

self-care, domestic life, interpersonal interactions and relationships, major life areas, and community, social and civic life (WHO 2007). See Table 8.1 for specific occupations of children and youth, using the WHO ICF-CY.

The ICF provided the common language used in the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF) by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA 2014). The OTPF outlines areas of occupation and the role of everyday life activities, or occupations in promoting health and participation through engagement in these occupations (AOTA 2014). Children, as occupational beings, have a right to participate in occupations to help them be healthful, productive and satisfied (AOTA 2014). The OTPF domain outlines five areas: occupations, client factors, performance skills, performance patterns, and contexts and environments (AOTA 2014). Occupations include activities of daily living (ADLs), instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), rest and sleep, education, work, play, leisure, and social participation (AOTA 2014). The remainder of this chapter will use the categories of occupations as outlined in the OTPF and in Table 8.2, adapted for specificity to children and youth.

Occupations of childhood become more complex with development and maturation. In toddler and preschool years, self-care skills and play are the most common occupations (Henderson and Pehoski 2006). Younger children require more assistance and supervision with all occupational tasks (Rodger and Brown 2006). With school-aged children come new roles and occupations including student, new roles at home, reading and writing tasks, socialization with peers, functional mobility, dressing, toileting, cognition, grooming, managing personal hygiene, functional communication and simple household tasks (Dunford and Bannigan 2011; Henderson and Pehoski 2006; Rodger and Brown 2006). From middle childhood to secondary school, occupations continue to become more complex and advanced, including managing other higher level self-cares with a right to privacy during

**Table 8.2**  Occupational therapy practice framework

| Areas of occupation | Examples |
|---|---|
| Activities of daily living (ADLs) | Bathing, showering |
| | Toileting |
| | Dressing |
| | Swallowing, eating |
| | Feeding |
| | Functional mobility |
| | Personal hygiene and grooming |
| Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) | Care of others |
| | Care of pets |
| | Communication management |
| | Health management and maintenance |
| | Meal preparation and cleanup |
| | Safety and emergency maintenance |
| | Shopping |
| Rest and sleep | Rest |
| | Sleep preparation |
| | Sleep participation |
| Education | Formal educational participation |
| | Informal personal education, interest exploration |
| Work | Employment interests and pursuits |
| | Job performance |
| | Volunteer exploration and participation |
| Play | Play exploration and participation |
| Leisure | Leisure exploration and participation |
| Social participation | Community, family, peer/friend |

*Note:* Adapted from the *Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (3rd Ed.)* (AOTA 2014)

these self-cares; making decisions about self-cares including what to wear, what to eat, and hygiene routines; maintaining health; managing money; and engaging in IADLs (Rodger and Brown 2006). (Images 8.3 and 8.4) See Table 8.3 for sample childhood occupations in each area of occupation including examples of how sophistication of tasks increases with age.





**Images 8.3 and 8.4**  (Feldhacker 2017) Self-care occupations increase in complexity with age and skill development. At the toddler stage, much help is required from others for completion of basic ADL tasks, including hygiene and grooming. By middle childhood to adolescence, these tasks are completed independently and become multifaceted to include IADLs, including care of others

**Table 8.3** Sample occupations of childhood, including increasing complexity with age

| Areas of occupation | Examples |
|---|---|
| Activities of daily living (ADLs) | Toddler or preschool: Picks up and eats finger foods. Begins toilet training |
| | Middle childhood to adolescence: Determines morning routine, including setting alarm and managing showering, dressing, eating and grooming/hygiene tasks |
| Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) | Toddler or preschool: NA- able to report when finished but requires others to prepare and clean up |
| | Middle childhood to adolescence: Cares for pets and others. Completes meal prep and clean up. Simple shopping and money management. Responsible for simple household chores |
| Rest and sleep | Toddler or preschool: Assistance from others to prepare for sleep. Takes naps during the day |
| | Middle childhood to adolescence: Independently manages sleep preparation |
| Education | Toddler or preschool: Most learning takes place in home environment. Begins to participate in more formal preschool education as preparation for school-readiness |
| | Middle childhood to adolescence: Engages in formal education with complex academic subjects and extracurricular activities. Attends other classes and activities of areas of interest: camps, clubs, etc. |
| Work | Toddler or preschool: NA- begins understanding concept of work through adults |
| | Middle childhood to adolescence: Engages in beginning employment or work activities (ex. mowing lawns, busing tables, etc.). Begins thinking about future work pursuits |
| Play | Toddler or preschool: Begins simple with exploring different objects and textures. Advances to pretend and imaginative play with others |
| | Middle childhood to adolescence: Participates in games with rules, sports and complex play requiring more supplies and equipment |

(continued)

**Table 8.3** (continued)

| Areas of occupation | Examples |
|---|---|
| Leisure | Toddler or preschool: Begins exploring leisure tasks with assistance from others in order to determine areas of interest |
| | Middle childhood to adolescence: Plans leisure activities around other required occupations and manages any equipment and supplies needed |

*Note:* Areas of occupation from the *Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (3rd Ed.)* (AOTA 2014)

## 8.4 Education

As described prior, one of the main roles of childhood is student, and participation in school and education is an occupation of children. School participation is what leads to a child's experiences of success and belonging and is what assists them in continuing to build identity and interests (Simeonsson et al. 2001). The context and environment of school is what provides the conditions for learning, both educationally and socially; engagement in school is responsible for development of academic competency and relationship forming, including friendships (Simeonsson et al. 2001). Thus, school is the basis for cognitive and social growth including literacy, conforming to societal expectations of behavior, achieving personal independence and participating in communities.

Despite the fact that children spend much of their time involved in the occupation of education, many of the associated components have implications for decreased childhood health. In a study by Vilaysack et al. (2016), children are less interested in productive activities such as homework and schoolwork, when compared to play and leisure tasks. When evaluating childhood emotions and experiences, homework was ranked as the least enjoyable and the most difficult. Negative emotions, such as sadness and boredom, were experienced during productive activities, and time spent alone or with teachers was viewed as negative as well (Vilaysack et al. 2016).

In what we have learned about occupations which are meaningful and psychologically rewarding, we understand that they should be mentally stimulating and should foster a connection with others while also being physically stimulating and fun (Ikiugu et al. 2015). This knowledge can have an impact on childhood wellness in relation to the occupation of education.

## 8.5 Play and Leisure

In the same study regarding time spent in education, Vilaysack et al. (2016) explored children's enjoyment and perception of leisure activities. Children were noted to report happy and excited emotions during leisure tasks; children were overall more interested in participating in leisure activities which included sports, drawing/reading, playing games, and riding skateboards, bikes, and scooters (Vilaysack et al. 2016). Other common leisure tasks include listening to music, hanging out with friends, watching television, and talking on the phone (King et al. 2003). Leisure satisfaction comes from success, mastery of the task, and social interaction during the activity; increased leisure satisfaction is correlated to increased life satisfaction (Kinney and Coyle 1992).

Play, recreation and leisure activity is the primary occupation for children (Chien et al. 2014). Play helps to develop a sense of playfulness and a sense of self-identity. "Self-directed or free play is considered vital in early childhood; it is a highly complex and motivating experience through which children learn to develop their social, conceptual, reactivity, problem-solving and adaptive skills" (Chantry and Dunford 2010, p.356). Play is one of the ways children begin to socially interact and to develop an understanding of how to engage and exchange in a reciprocal fashion (Chantry and Dunford 2010). As children continue to advance in age and development, this play continues to become more structured and manifests itself as sports or other extracurricular activities.

Participation in extracurricular activities has been shown to decrease the incidence of behavioral and emotional difficulties (Law 2002).

Occupational engagement in sports and recreation has multiple benefits including promotion of inclusion, conditioning, physical functioning and overall well-being (Murphy et al. 2008). This conditioning, physical and psychological function includes improved cardiac and respiratory functions, enhanced muscle tone and coordination, reduced stress, modulation of arousal as well as energy and aggression release (Reynolds 2006). Sports also have been linked to improved self-competence and confidence, socialization and social inclusion which create a sense of belonging, as well as development of new and complex skills through use of the sensorimotor system and enhanced cerebral and cerebellar reorganization for motor learning (Murphy et al. 2008; Reynolds 2006).

Although there are obvious benefits for skill development related to play and leisure tasks, it is important to note that leisure tasks require higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Larson and Verma 1999). What this means is that children must complete the tasks as a result of inherent drive; typically this drive happens from birth with an innate desire to master tasks. However, many times children do not choose tasks which challenge themselves, when it comes to unstructured leisure time. Instead they may choose to watch TV or hang out with friends. These tasks, if unchallenging, do not always promote development (Larson and Verma 1999) or lead to the sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1997) which makes occupations rewarding and health-promoting.

## 8.6 Social Participation

Though AOTA identifies social participation as a distinct occupation, socialization may occur during each of the other occupations discussed. Social participation is an important component of childhood which allows interaction with others, building relationships with peers and adults, and learning to communicate effectively. As with other occupations, positive emotions of meaningfulness and psychological reward are noted when occupations take place in a social context with others; for children this includes

family, classmates and friends (Ikiugu et al. 2015; Vilaysack et al. 2016). Social activity and participation has been shown to decrease school dropouts through improved engagement in school, develop scholastic skills and self-esteem and create effective social relationships (Law 2002).

## 8.7    Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

ADLs typical of childhood and youth are listed in Table 8.2. As described prior, these basic self-maintenance tasks increase in complexity and decrease in provided assistance from birth to adulthood. Self-care advances based upon level of importance from feeding, to dressing, to bathing (Henderson and Pehoski 2006). By the age of 5–7 years, children are typically independent with all self-care tasks (Dunford and Bannigan 2011; Henderson and Pehoski 2006; Rodger and Brown 2006). This independence leads to advancement in privacy and self-management skills, allowing children to make decisions based on their self-care routines and tasks. Though these everyday tasks are often informal, they play a vital role in preparing for engagement in other more complex tasks and also promote skills and development which ultimately influence mental and physical health (Law et al. 2004).

## 8.8    Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)

IADLs allow continued responsibility for maintaining and contributing to family and others as they allow for expansion of childhood roles and routines. IADLs are demonstrative of an increased requirement of skill level and quality of participation for completion. Success in these tasks continue to prepare children, youth and adolescents for adulthood with higher-level physical, cognitive and emotional requirements which build skills in these areas. IADLs can be both formal and informal as some are self-initiated and spontaneous whereas others require more planning

and structure. For example, meal preparation and clean up often happens as part of a routine or with hunger and is not always structured, such as making an after school snack. However, this same occupation can be more complex and structured to include creating a grocery list, shopping for foods, setting the table and preparing a holiday meal. See Table 8.2 for a reminder of IADL tasks typical of children and youth.

## 8.9    Rest and Sleep

Sleep and rest allow for restoration and rejuvenation required for engagement in all other occupations, allowing children and youth to meet their role expectations. The amount of sleep required decreases with age until it remains fairly stable in adulthood. Averages for these amounts were completed using Table 8.1 from Matricciani, Olds, Blunden, Rigney and Williams (Matricciani et al. 2012). Healthy infants typically require 17.4 h per day; by age 6 this decreases to 11.5 h, by 12 years 9.7 h, and by 18 years 8.8 h. Sleep works to allow restoration of brain function and structure (Matricciani et al. 2012). As such, sleep and rest become vital occupations of childhood in order to support healthy social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.

## 8.10    Work

In non-industrialized societies, children's time use is dominated by labor and unstructured leisure, with labor consuming more than 6 h per day (Larson and Verma 1999). This emphasis on labor is in an attempt to train children and youth for the adult roles which they will hold in society (Larson and Verma 1999). In postindustrial and Western societies, children's work in the sense of paid labor is not fundamental to sustaining family economies; children are instead prepared through education (Larson and Verma 1999; Larson 2004). Labor is typically reduced to less than 1 h per day; time is instead filled with schoolwork and media use, with much time spent with peers in leisure activities (Larson and Verma 1999).

In many instances in postindustrial societies, the category of work includes not only economic production but also schoolwork, taking place in school through teacher-led activities which typically involve pencil and paper for production and which are evaluated according to specified standards (Larson and Verma 1999; Larson 2004). The function of this work is to foster development and occupational competence as well as to assist in household tasks and to foster social relationships (Larson 2004).

In a study by Larson (2004), children were able to report a difference between work and play. Work, especially in relation to school work, was a known part of development and movement toward independence. Work provided children with an improved understanding of responsibility, especially toward others (Larson 2004).

## 8.11 Occupations and Development

From developmental science, including motor learning, dynamical systems, and developmental systems theories, we understand that all areas of development operate simultaneously: sensory, motor, cognitive, and emotional (Humphrey 2002; Mandich and Cronin 2016). Further, occupations and development have a complex and bi-directional relationship with occupational engagement as the process for and the outcomes of development (Humphrey 2002). Occupations promote skill development in children as they mature, including emotional, cognitive, physical, and social skills. As skills continue to mature and as more skills are gained, children are able to engage in more complex occupations. An example of this is provided by Hoogsteen and Woodgate (2010). A child is interested in engaging in an occupation which he or she finds desirable due to the ability to participate with others, feel included, and gain control through the ability to choose. This motivation, interest, and engagement allows the child to acquire skills (physical, emotional, and social), find meaning, build relationships, and gain independence. This sense of success as a result prompts a sense of further

motivation to gain other skills, thus prompting goal formation and enhancing values. Goal formation will lead to engagement in other occupations and meaningful tasks (Hoogsteen and Woodgate 2010).

Participation in occupations is essential to development. Occupations facilitate changes in body structures and functions and promote development, and development and changes in body function and structure allows changes and advancement in occupations (Dunford and Bannigan 2011; Hoogsteen and Woodgate 2010). This is a dynamic process which arises from the interaction of the child and his or her innate characteristics, environment, and the task (Dunford and Bannigan 2011; Humphrey 2002). Occupations emerge through the child interacting with the environment and through activities that he or she wants to do or is expected to perform (Humphrey 2002). It is a combined readiness of intrinsic capacities and caregiver or societal expectations for occupational completion which creates occupational engagement, behavior and further development (Humphrey 2002). These intrinsic capacities, through engagement, continue to mature and reorganize for efficient performance, as described in the motor learning theory, and all of this happens in context. Goal-directed fulfillment of these tasks and the experience of success, enhances engagement and leads to continued growth and motivation (Thelen et al. 1993; Poulsen et al. 2006).

The first two decades of life are important in that there is rapid growth both physically and psychologically (Simeonsson et al. 2001); development and acquisition of major skills for independence is happening at a quick rate. In early childhood, opportunities for engagement are contingent upon adults (Pizzi and Vroman 2013), but as children mature and gain skills, they depend less on adults for occupational exposure and opportunity. As such, there are both internal and external factors for development. Context including presence or lack of environmental and social supports can promote or hinder development; this includes availability of resources and exposure to occupational experiences. "Participation in everyday activities is considered to be a vital part

of children's development, which is related to their quality of life and future life outcomes" (King et al. 2003, p. 63). Thus, lack of opportunity to participate and engage as well as lack of environmental supports manifest as lack of growth and development (King et al. 2003; Law et al. 2004).

The development of skills and engagement in occupations work reciprocally to promote development. For example, as children engage in motor activities, such as playing on a climbing frame, they develop physical motor skills: strength, coordination, motor control, proprioception, and body awareness. (Mandich and Rodger 2006). Again, skills promote development but are also impacted by engagement; they lead to successful performance but there must also be a match between skills, roles, and occupations in order for there to be success. "Children learn by doing and participating in meaningful activities. It is this 'doing' and participating in daily activities that is crucial for normal development. Through participation, children build occupational repertoire, develop independence and become productive" (Mandich and Rodger 2006, p. 132). This independence, productivity, engagement and participation leads to overall improved physical and emotional health, quality of life, and overall well-being.

## 8.12 Children's Well-Being

Children's well-being is multifaceted and uniquely composed of various factors. Well-being is "the engaged participation in the activities that are deemed desirable and valued in a cultural community, and the psychological experiences that are produced by such engagement" (Weisner 2014, p. 87). Childhood well-being has been assessed with objective measures from adults' perspectives and subjective measures from children's perspectives (Estola et al. 2014; Lee and Yoo 2015). Differences between adult and child perspectives have led to emerging measurements over the past 20 years of children's subjective well-being, or children's assessment of their own lives, in different cultural and geographic contexts. (Casas and Rees 2015; Dinisman and Ben-Arieh 2015; Fattore et al. 2017). Subjective well-being is indicated by multiple factors, such as a child's self-image, life satisfaction, and mental health, which are generally predicted by family and peer relationships, school, neighborhood quality, age (being younger), and gender (being male) (Lawler et al. 2017). These perceptions of well-being are developed through a transformative interaction between the unique attributes and developmental capacities of the child, the child's access to safe and meaningful occupations, and the child's context, including cultural, personal, physical, social, temporal, and virtual properties (Brockevelt et al. 2017). Both qualitative and quantitative research studies have contributed to our understanding of how well-being develops, and how contextual factors affect well-being, both positively and negatively (Fattore et al. 2017).

## 8.13 Developmental Capacities

All children are inclined to develop certain characteristics established by their genetic predisposition; however, it is also known that environments and early experiences shape a child's brain development, skill acquisition ability, and social, cognitive, and motor performance. The way in which a child is able to use these affective, cognitive, and motoric resources in order to manage the demands of life is known as that child's developmental capacity (Drago-Severson 2009). Developmental capacities develop sequentially, with each milestone relying on mastery of the previous one(s) (Greenspan 1998). For example, when a young infant is hungry, he will become dysregulated, cry, and root for a nipple. Once obtained, the infant automatically begins sucking and returns to a calm state. This process begins reflexively, yet learning soon occurs. The child begins to separate sensations and understands which sensations are soothing and which are distressing. He or she becomes skilled in obtaining the nipple, latching, and sucking efficiently. Through participation in this occupation, the child learns the

**Table 8.4** Developmental capacities for learning and development

| Stage | Milestone |
|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Self-regulation and interest in the world |
| 2 | Intimacy, engagement, and falling in love |
| 3 | Two-way communication |
| 4 | Complex communication |
| 5 | Emotional ideas |
| 6 | Emotional and logical thinking |

Adapted from *The growth of the mind: And the endangered origins of intelligence.* Boston, MA: Da Capo Press by Stanley Greenspan 1998

skill of self-regulation, which affords the development of attentiveness, engagement, and interaction. A typical infant in a nurturing environment will master developmental capacities rather quickly and with ease (Greenspan 1998). When provided with opportunities for sensory exploration, movement, and human connection, infants and children will use trial and error to generalize information about social constructs and the properties of objects and environments (Llewellyn 2012). These experiences afford children the opportunity to use multi-modal perception and perspective to solve both motor and cognitive problems (Table 8.4).

## 8.14 Ability to Participate in Occupations and Contextual Factors

The development of motor and process capacities cannot be separated from the occupations nor the contexts in which they are performed. Engagement in childhood activities contributes to a child's experience of well-being, both positively and negatively, based on the context (see Table 8.2). In the example of an infant searching for food, that infant was participating in the co-occupations of feeding and eating, requiring active participation of both the child and the mother. The mother feeds, the infant eats. Simultaneously, the mother soothes, and the infant is comforted. The context in which this co-occupation takes place is typically one that is family-oriented, in a non-disruptive environment, predictable, and rhythmic. If a component of the context changes, the performance of either the

**Table 8.5** Contexts and environments

| Context | Definition |
|---------|-----------|
| Cultural | Activity patterns, customs, beliefs, expectations, and behavioral standards accepted by the society in which the client is a member |
| Personal | "Features of the individual that are not part of a health condition or health status" (WHO 2007, p. 15). Include age, gender, socioeconomic status, educational status, and group and population membership |
| Temporal | Stage of life, time of day or year, duration and rhythm of activity, and history |
| Virtual | Environment in which communication occurs by means of airwaves or computers and in the absence of physical contact |
| Environments | Definition |
| Physical | Natural and built nonhuman surroundings and the objects in them; includes sensory properties |
| Social | Presence of, relationships with, and expectations of persons, groups, or populations with whom the clients have contact |

Adapted from the *Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (3rd Ed.)* (AOTA 2014)
*WHO* World Health Organization

child or the mother may be disrupted. Slight perturbations in context may be overcome easily if the participants have mastered the activity and are able to adapt (Frank 1996). However, if the activity is not mastered, and continually changing or difficult, the activity may be associated with stress, decreased self-esteem, and avoidance (Schultz 2009). These early experiences with either optimal or disrupted occupational performance initiates a child's trajectory for development of the child's self-image, life satisfaction, and mental health (Table 8.5).

## 8.15 Contextual Influences on Well-Being

**Cultural** Children's experiences throughout development result in cultural connection; these experiences contribute to development of self-image and cultural identity through participation

in cultural traditions and rituals. Participation in these meaningful activities also supports children's sense of belonging and self-esteem as they act cooperatively with members of their group to share beliefs, partake in rituals, and maintain traditions (AOTA 2014). When children from different backgrounds are expected to be a part of two cultures with different norms and expectations, it can be complex and confusing to them. Cultural conflict may occur when a child perceives the need to choose one culture over the other, even when having to live and participate in both, or when the child's culture is not accepted by his/her peers (Commonwealth of Australia 2013). This can cause turmoil and negatively affect that child's mental health and well-being. Alternately, if children have a positive sense of belonging and acceptance in both cultures, their mental health and well-being is supported (Commonwealth of Australia 2013).

**Personal** Physical health is associated with improved overall subjective well-being in children (Fattore et al. 2009). Being able to use one's body and mind effectively to access and interact with environments allows for exploration and participation with fewer barriers. Additionally, socio-economic status has been found to be significantly correlated with the level of subjective well-being for children in Pakistan, as has gender (Manzoor et al. 2015). Specifically, boys were found to have higher levels of subjective well-being than girls similar to findings from other countries (Lawler et al. 2017). Additionally, boys' school performance in elementary school years has a strong influence on behavioral aspects of their adolescent well-being while girls' primary school performance predicts social well-being in adolescence (Gutman et al. 2010).

**Temporal** As children enter adolescence, their subjective well-being may change; when transitioning from late childhood to early adolescence, they begin to self-evaluate their own attractiveness, compare themselves with others, and demonstrate preoccupation with themselves (Vroman 2010). This awareness of one's self can either positively or negatively affect a child's well-

being, based on the child's perception and the individuals influencing the child's perception. In a study by Newland et al. (2014a, b), parent involvement predicted self-image for 10-year-old children; whereas parent involvement and school climate predicted self-image for 12-year-old children. Additionally, work and volunteer experiences can contribute to components of well-being such as healthy character development and self-image (Vroman 2010). These experiences promote well-being when supportive and positive role models are involved and the work takes place in a safe environment. When adolescents work for an excessive amount of time during the adolescent stage, they are at higher risk for substance abuse and emotional distress, leading to decreased well-being (Shanahan et al. 1996).

Rhythm, routines, and rituals can promote well-being as they provide predictability and promote skill development through repeated presentations of expected stimuli and rehearsed responses. Many times routines and rituals are used to decrease anxiety and modulate sensory input (Young 2007). Throughout a child's day, many transitions occur. From getting ready for school in the morning and getting into bed at night, to the life transitions of moving, family restructuring, and transferring between schools. Transitions can be difficult for some children as the expectations of different environments can vary greatly. Supportive social systems can buffer this stress. If support systems are not in place, these temporal changes may disrupt a child's wellbeing.

**Virtual** Although online activity can be perceived as an isolating experience, socialization is often the driving force for participation in virtual worlds (Ferguson 2011, 2013; Kafai 2010). Virtual worlds are online environments in which users create virtual representations of themselves and socialize and interact with each other (Williamson 2009). Social connectedness can also be positively influenced through the use of video chat and texting. In an ongoing study by Brockevelt, Cerny, and Lawler, discussions with children regarding what made them children feel well, one child discussed calling his grandfather by phone while he was sick which made him feel

better. Another child discussed calling and texting friends that had moved away to keep in touch. Virtual contexts promote social interaction when physical social interaction is not possible.

**Physical**  Access to environments that are safe and offer opportunities for exploration is a vital component of well-being. Children who felt unsafe were twice as likely to report lower subjective well-being when compared to children who felt safe in their community (Ben-Arieh and Shimon 2014; Eriksson et al. 2011). Urban children reported lower community trust and safety in comparison to children living in rural areas (Eriksson et al. 2011). Living in environments with high levels of violence, limited resources, and overcrowding has been shown to threaten both family and child well-being (Fattore et al. 2009; Newland et al. 2014a, b; Vanderbilt-Adriance and Shaw 2008; Wyman et al. 1999). Child well-being has been negatively correlated with impoverished environments and neighborhoods that had high levels of income inequality (Pickett and Wilkinson 2007). Personal well-being was also found to be associated with material and housing circumstances (Bradshaw et al. 2011). Positive school and neighborhood contexts have been found to be associated with positive child well-being (Lawler et al. 2017; Oberle et al. 2010).

**Social**  Activities that foster relationships with others are identified as one of the most meaningful types of activity (Ikiugu et al. 2012). Accordingly, friendship is a strong indicator of children's subjective well-being (Gaspar de Matos et al. 2012; Lindberg and Swanberg 2006; Newland et al. 2014a, b). As children's peers are most influential during adolescence, positive friendships and feelings of acceptance promote well-being (Vroman 2010). Alternatively, feelings of isolation and poor self-image may develop when there is a lack of positive peer engagement. Positive affect friendships were shown to be beneficial to a child's subjective well-being while negative affect friendships and bullying decreased the subjective well-being of children (Goswami 2012). Family social contexts also influence well-being. Children who live in two-parent

households reported higher subjective well-being than children in other living arrangements, such as care homes, single-parent families, and extended day care (Dinisman et al. 2012; Hamama and Arazi 2012; Llosada-Gistau et al. 2015). Additionally, positive family dynamics and neighborhood adult connectedness were correlated with higher levels of children's subjective well-being (Eryılmaz 2012; Hamama and Arazi 2012; Newland et al. 2014a, b; Rask et al. 2003). A negative correlation was found between children's subjective well-being and unfair treatment by adults (Goswami 2012). Social activities may promote well-being through enjoyment, developing competence, and engaging in supportive relationships with adults and peers (Fattore et al. 2009; Newland et al. 2014a, b).

## 8.16   Children's Perspective on How Engagement in Activities Facilitates Well-Being

The voices in this section come from children between the ages of 8 and 13 years old, of typical development, and from a rural American ecocultural context. A study investigating subjective well-being in rural United States children used open-ended interviews and surveys to uncover which activities occupy a child's time, the context that the activities were performed in, and the contextual factors of the occupations that were indicative of well-being (Brockevelt et al. 2017). Children reported participating in a combination of formal and informal activities. Common formal activities included participating in education, organized groups or clubs, and athletic teams. Children also regularly engaged in informal occupations such as expressive and creative interests, social engagement, active leisure, and physical play activities. Participation in these activities positively contributed to the children's well-being; analysis of the interviews led to multiple indicators of subjective well-being, classified into six domains – social connectedness, physical health, mastery and agency, safety and security, meaningful access to resources, and meaningful use of time (Brockevelt et al. 2017). The most

interesting component of this study was the explanation of *how* participation in occupations led to well-being.

The social connectedness domain developed from children discussing participation in activities that provided a shared meaningful context for social participation. Activities leading to development of this domain included activities that required the children to rely on each other and work together to meet a common goal and activities that provided an experience of shared enjoyment, entertainment, amusement, or diversion. Additionally, environmental concepts such as the neighborhood was mentioned when discussing social participation.

> Friends are people who want to be with you for who you are.
> [Time with family] it involves talking and we end up laughing at the dumbest things... it makes me happy because, I don't know, it feels good.

Activities that were physically challenging, goal oriented, and contributing to cardiovascular health and fitness were also identified by the children as supportive of well-being. These activities included team sports, self-care, and unstructured physical activity.

> Running, when you cross the finish line….it feels good because you have just done something.
> Washing my face is important to me because, I have acne, and that lowers my self-confidence and I want to get rid of it and so it's something to do daily.

A desire for mastery and agency, or self-determination, were identified as components associated with well-being. This was exemplified by some children's growing desire to assist in the home, do things independently, and help others. Many were clearly seeking autonomy and independence from their parents. While this was a consistent theme, it was complimented by the children's sustaining desire for safety and security. They valued consistent relationships and responses from teachers and parents. This is a clear example of their stage of development as they transition into early adolescence and move from appropriate dependence on others to inter-

dependence with, and responsibility for, others. They transition from *preparation* to actual *participation* within community and social environments (Vroman 2010).

> I sort of want to go to places on my own but my parents think I'm too young to go to places on my own.
> I just like playing with him a lot because at times I can like show him like something new ... I'm a role model for him.
> When it comes to personal talks, she's like the person I can go to [mom].

Having meaningful access to resources and using time meaningfully were themes that emerged throughout the interviews. Many of the activities that children identified as promoting well-being required access to specific places, resources, and materials. For example, many of the children referred to participation in music lessons, competitive team and individual sports, and informal social engagement in public places such as a church or mall. These children had access to safe places and adults, and opportunities for engagement in productive, skill-based activities. Additionally, when discussing both formal and informal activities that promote feelings of being well, there was a lack of reference to passive leisure (relaxing, watching television). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi discussed the use of time and how participation in challenging, meaningful activities produces a sense of happiness and flow, whereas participation in passive leisure results in less enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi 1997).

> Games that are easy aren't fun.
> It feels good to spend my money when I did something to get the money.
> I like riding horses because they can be hard to ride.

The children's perceptions of their well-being were constructed through reflection on their personal attributes, social contexts, participation in activities, and surrounding environments. They offer a unique perspective into how their relationships with others, their environments, and their activities support development of positive mental health, self-image, and life satisfaction.

## 8.17  Transformative Relationship Between Occupation, Context, and Children's Subjective Well-Being

Childhood occupations, in addition to contextual and personal factors, are important aspects of well-being. The Person-Environment-Occupation Model (Law et al. 1996) and ecological and relational constructs developed by Bronfenbrenner (1989) and Lawler et al. (2017) can be used as a foundation for understanding the dynamic relationship between children's perspectives of their lives, and how their environments and their engagement in meaningful activities influence their well-being. The interactive components of the child's attributes, the environment, and the occupation's qualities contribute to an individual's occupational performance. These three components collectively influence occupational performance, which is considered "a complex, dynamic, phenomenon … that is shaped by the transaction of person, environment, and occupations in which the person engages" (Law et al. 1996, p.17). This performance is based on the child's performance capacity, reflective of their unique qualities and abilities, and that child's ability to meet the demands of the activity within dynamic contexts and environments.

From an early age, the occupations one participates in and the context in which the participation occurs promotes development of body structures and functions. The interactions with caregivers and exposure to sensory stimuli help the child understand their world. When participation is supported by caring adults and buffered by safe and positive environments, positive mental health and self-image are fostered. As the child grows and participation in occupations becomes more independent and reflective of the child's developing autonomy and ability, the child will rely on past learning to meet the increasing demands of adolescence. Understanding the dynamic relationship between the child's attributes, contexts, and occupational demands and how these components influence the growth, mental health, and self-image of a child, allows us the opportunity and responsibility to intention-ally foster well-being throughout the child's developmental trajectory.

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# Free Time, Friends and Future: A Quality of Life Study with 8 Years Old Children in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

**9**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this chapter is to show some results of a project for the study and the measurement of well-being and quality of life of 590 boys and girls of 8 years old, living in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. We use the International Survey of Children's Well-Being, with the intention of collecting information on the well-being of boys and girls. In this chapter we will focus on the results obtained for the dimensions: friends, use of free time, more about you and your life, facts of life and the future. The results showed that concerning friendship, 66% of the 8 years old boys and girls indicated to completely agree with respect to the kindness of their friends while 75% said that they have sufficient amount of friends. About the use of free time, half the children carry out after school activities nearly every day, and a quarter of them once or twice a week. About their life, the facts of their life, and their future, 80% totally agree with the lives they lead, while 64,44% express that their lives are completely in accordance with what they want them to be. On the other hand, 86% completely agree to the fact that they have a good life. As to the question of having what they want from life, the percentage is 68%, while 77% assert that their lives are excellent.

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## 9.1 Children's Quality of Life

Nowadays, quality of life is acknowledged as a concept which integrates objective and subjective approaches. The objective issues are made evident in the quest for a number of goods and services provided by the built environment, while the subjective view considers the subjects' evaluations and understanding. Thus it may be inferred that it is a concept which involves the experiences undergone by the subjects during their lives, in their daily contexts; their possible access to goods and services; and their competence to make use of the territory.

In the case of children, the main concern is to understand that the improvement of children's quality of life – under the influence of education, the building of a sense of security, prevention of

trauma exposure, etc. may play a crucial part in their development (Sen 1999, quoted Iglesias, p. 5). In fact, children's quality of life is not only important at that stage but also in their future lives. Investments for children are important by their own right due to the fact that they are the key to healthier lives, a better mental and physical performance, and productivity and the capabilities enjoyed by adults are largely influenced by their early childhood experiences (Sen 1999, p.5).

Beyond the established age limits, we ought to really understand that there are contextual and spatial differences which are ambiguous and flexible. Moreover

> early childhood is considered a social phenomenon, not a biological one (it therefore varies according to the different social groups, societies, and historical moments), its construction, discussion, and consequences are worthy of academic attention. Besides, these new research studies on infant geography are based on the idea that boys and girls are social actors whose actions are important to the construction of the world they live in. (Baylina et al. 2008, p. 57).

In research with children, risk factors and pathologies have had historical preponderance over their quality of life, and it is only in the last few years that the scientific and professional community has taken an interest in discovering what makes children happy, what gives them satisfaction, in other words, what generates a sense of well-being (Ben-Arieh 2000; Ben-Arieh et al. 2013; Benatuil 2002; Mieles Barrera and Tonon 2015; Tonon 2015).

Studying child well-being implies visualizing children as a social group which interacts with the other social groups, thus modifying and making contributions to the changes undergone by society. Moreover, child well-being ought not to be represented or evaluated by a single indicator, for children's lives develop in multiple dimensions (family, peers, school, neighborhood), and each of the latter exerts an influence over their perception of well-being (Ben-Arieh 2000; Ben-Arieh and Goerge 2001; Bradshaw and Mayhew 2005).

Having friends during early childhood is a significant social achievement and an indicator of social capability. Having friends during school years is crucial to the development of social competence, for it fosters adaptive, cooperative, and pro-social behavior, thus becoming a protective factor (Hartup 1995). In this sense this is what friendship is one of the human relationships that offer social support for children (Melero and Fuentes 1992).

Reflection upon the use of time in children's lives is not new, and the best way to achieve knowledge and understanding of children's lives and well-being is by acquiring a more complete knowledge of their time usage and daily activities (Ben-Arieh and Ofir 2002).

Research work indicates that time is a dimension of life that must comply with the requirements of society and that, the kind of activity carried out in free time, will consequently have greater or lesser impacts on well-being (Sarriera et al. 2014 quoted in Schütz and Stum 2017, p. 268).

In this way, the construction of knowledge on children's quality of life becomes a possibility of focusing on an age group with peculiar characteristics thus acquiring special views, regarding the dimensions and variables contemplated in research studies on child well-being – in other words, especially reflecting upon children as a minority group entitled to rights, as established by the Universal Declaration of Children's Rights (1959).

## 9.2 Context and Population

The Argentine Republic is situated in the south of South America, and it occupies a total area of 2.780.400 km². The republic is administratively organized into 23 provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires – seat of the federal government.

According to the General Population, Habitation, and Household Census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) in 2010, Argentina's population concentrated a total number of 40.117.096 inhabitants, with a positive absolute variance of 3.856.966 inhabitants, equivalent to a relative inter-census variance (VRI) of 10,6 as compared

to the previous survey carried out in 2001 – a smaller variance to the one registered in the 1991–2001 period, which broadly amounted to 11,2%. Population density has been estimated at 14,4 inhabitants per square km, although it shows strong disparities towards the interior of each of the units of the second order, i.e. those provinces which evidence extremes that range from 1,1 inhabitant per square kilometer in Santa Cruz to 14.450,8 inhabitants per square kilometer in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

On reflecting upon the three large age-groups, i.e. the economically inactive population (PT) between 0 and 14 years of age, the potentially active population (PPA) roughly between 15 and 64 years of age, and the inactive population (PD), i.e. those aged 65 and above, the first of these groups represents 25,48%, the second group 64,29%, and the third group 10,23% of the total population.

Around 2010, the Argentine Republic concentrated a total number of 10.22.317 boys and girls between 0 and 14 years of age, within a demographic structure which, shows an ageing tendency since 1970. If we specifically concentrate on boys and girls between 8 and 12 years of age that there are 3.438.219, 41% of which are boys and 49% girls, as distinguished by gender.

## 9.3    The Sample

The sample collected for this study follows the international guidelines established by *The Children's World project.* In compliance with these guidelines, we have released an equal number of surveys of boys and girls in public and private educational institutions from the Greater Buenos Aires and the Interior of the province of Buenos Aires.

The reasons for the selection of Buenos Aires province as a work field, within the Argentine Republic, is the fact that the province of Buenos Aires is the most densely populated in the country – its total population being approximately 40% of the total general population of the country (15.625.085, INDEC 2010). Greater Buenos Aires consists of 24 districts, whereas the Interior

of Buenos Aires province comprises 110 districts.

In this chapter we only worked with the results of the application of the questionnaire to children of 8 years old.

According to the 2010 Census released by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC)[1] Argentina had 672.139, 8 year old children: 341.649 boys and 330.490 girls. In Greater Buenos Aires there were 160.563 8-year-old children, out of which 159.330 were actually attending educational institutions, the rest had either attended or had never attended. In the Interior of the province of Buenos Aires a total number of 91.591 8-year-old children were registered, out of which 91.114 were actually attending school and the rest had either attended or never attended.

The sample constructed a non-probability sampling, i.e. the selected schools were chosen on account of their possible access through direct contact with District Headquarters which defined, and ultimately allowed, our access to the public schools of their choice. We operated in a similar manner with private schools, in which case the contacts and release permits were obtained through the legal representatives of the educational institutions. Our decisions were prompted by the possible access to the information, the attainment of reliable, creditable, first hand, diverse information, and therefore, representative of the heterogeneous society predominating in the areas included in the release.

## 9.4    Results

Based on general data, the definite sample release is composed of a total number of 590 children of 8-years-old: 298 females (49,5%) and 292 males (50,5%). On the other hand, 236 live in Greater Buenos Aires while in the Interior of the province of Buenos Aires, live 354 of them. A total number of five educational institutions were surveyed in Greater Buenos Aires and nine educational insti-

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[1] http://www.indec.mecon.ar/

tutions were surveyed in the Interior of the province of Buenos Aires.

General Pueyrredon (city of Mar del Plata) Balcarce and San Cayetano. Three schools were surveyed in the district of Balcarce, two are public and the other one private. In the district of San Cayetano all primary schools are public educational institutions, we worked in three schools, two schools are located in the urban area and the other one in the rural area (in Ochandio). In the city of Mar del Plata, we worked in three private institutions – with the corresponding permit issued by their school heads and legal representatives. The selection was made taking into account that they represented the city's social diversity.

In Greater Buenos Aires we worked in the city of Banfield (two public schools) and the city of Lomas de Zamora (two public schools). In the city of Ramos Mejía we worked with a private school. All of these institutions are situated in the urban perimeter.

The urban school classes contributed around 30/35 boys/girls and, it may be pointed out that the boys/girls as well as the teachers showed an open disposition towards the survey release. There was always time for questions and comments, especially on the children's part, for they expressed their curiosity about the survey release, the university life and the programs they can study in the future. In the rural area classes are less numerous. In fact, the participant school had 13 boys/girls between 11 and 6 years old, at the time when the survey release was conducted; which explains why the teachers' teaching strategies consist in working on the teaching contents individually or in very small groups.

### 9.4.1 Children's Friends

An important aspect of personal wellbeing is the relationship boys and girls have with their friends. Thus, the children were asked if they consider their friends to be generally nice to them, and whether they have enough friends, applying Likert scale (5 points) questions, eliciting answers that range from "I don't agree" to "I completely agree".

Table 9.1 sums up the results reflecting these aspects of their lives. Most of the 8-year-old surveyed children's answers, 65,8%, were "I completely agree" and 74,6% professed to have "Enough friends". In contrast, the proportions are low regarding those who do not agree about their friends being nice to them and regarding the amount of friends they have.

The Likert scale was applied to 8-year-old boys and girls, using emoticons. A high proportion claimed to be very happy with their friends, while their relationship with people in the neighborhood and people in general were graded between 3 and 4 points (Table 9.2).

Taking gender into consideration (see Table 9.3), the girls show higher positive percent-

**Table 9.1** Degree of agreement regarding friendship in 8-year-old boys and girls

|  | I disagree | I don't agree much | I partially agree | I quite agree | I completely agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My friends are generally nice to me | 2,8 | 3,3 | 7,9 | 20,1 | 65,8 |
| I have enough friends | 2,1 | 2,8 | 4,8 | 15,6 | 74,6 |

Source: personal elaboration

**Table 9.2** Degree of happiness with their friends, and relationships with other people in 8-year-old boys and girls

|  | 0 (Saddest face) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 (Happiest face) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Your friends | 1,2 | 1,5 | 2,7 | 14,1 | 80,4 | 100,0 |
| People living in your neighborhood/next door | 3,4 | 2,7 | 9,1 | 24,7 | 60,1 | 100,0 |
| Your relationship with people in general | 1,9 | 1,4 | 5,4 | 23,9 | 67,4 | 100,0 |

Source. Personal elaboration

**Table 9.3**  Degree of happiness with their friends, and relationships with other people in 8-year-old boys and girls – according to gender

|  |  | Boys % | Girls % | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Your friends | 0 (unhappiest face) | 1,39 | 1,02 | 1,20 |
|  | 1 | 2,09 | 1,02 | 1,55 |
|  | 2 | 3,14 | 2,37 | 2,75 |
|  | 3 | 15,68 | 12,54 | 14,09 |
|  | 4 (happiest face) | 77,70 | 83,05 | 80,41 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |
| People living in your neighborhood/next door | 0 | 2,43 | 4,39 | 3,42 |
|  | 1 | 3,82 | 1,69 | 2,74 |
|  | 2 | 8,68 | 9,46 | 9,08 |
|  | 3 | 21,53 | 27,70 | 24,66 |
|  | 4 | 63,54 | 56,76 | 60,10 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |
| Your relationship with people in general | 0 | 2,81 | 1,04 | 1,92 |
|  | 1 | 1,75 | 1,04 | 1,39 |
|  | 2 | 5,26 | 5,54 | 5,40 |
|  | 3 | 23,86 | 23,88 | 23,87 |
|  | 4 | 66,32 | 68,51 | 67,42 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |

Source: personal elaboration

**Table 9.4**  Frequency of socialization with their friends during the last week in 8-year-old boys and girls

|  | Never | Once or twice | Most days | Every day | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chatting with them | 10,1 | 18,5 | 26,2 | 45,2 | 100,0 |
| Having fun together | 8,8 | 11,7 | 23,9 | 55,6 | 100,0 |
| Gathering to study (after school hours) | 48,7 | 22,3 | 10,4 | 18,5 | 100,0 |

Source: personal elaboration

ages regarding their relationship with friends and general relationships, not so in the relationships with the people living in their neighborhood or next door, where the boys reflect the higher percentage.

They were consulted about the frequency with which they had had conversations with their friends in the previous week, whether they had had fun together, and/or whether they had gathered to study after school (see Table 9.4).

In this case, half the boys and girls declared to have chatted and had fun after school hours, while the proportion is reverted in connection with working together after school, which rarely occurs – this situation is likely to be related to their age. An analysis of the replies, according to gender, shows that they are balanced – a slight difference being found in the case of the girls,

regarding gatherings with their friends to chat and to study (see Table 9.5).

### 9.4.2  Use of Free Time

The possibility of having free time, leisure time to play and have fun is essential to the lives of boys and girls in order to achieve a state of well-being. Thus, the question regarding time-usage took a turn towards the practice of sports, artistic and language-learning activities after school, as well as their extra-curricular reading behavior, helping with household chores, doing their homework, watching TV, and using the computers.

Half the 8-year-old boys and girls (see Table 9.6) carry out activities after school hours almost every day, and a quarter of the total

**Table 9.5** Frequency of socialization with their friends in 8-year-old boys and girls, according to gender

|  |  | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chatting with them | Never | 7,66 | 12,50 | 10,14 |
|  | Once or twice | 21,90 | 15,28 | 18,51 |
|  | Most days | 28,10 | 24,31 | 26,16 |
|  | Every day | 42,34 | 47,92 | 45,20 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |
| Having fun together | Never | 6,83 | 10,80 | 8,85 |
|  | Once or twice | 13,67 | 9,76 | 11,68 |
|  | Most days | 23,74 | 24,04 | 23,89 |
|  | Every day | 55,76 | 55,40 | 55,58 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |
| Gathering to study (after school hours) | Never | 52,79 | 44,95 | 48,74 |
|  | Once or twice | 21,93 | 22,65 | 22,30 |
|  | Most days | 7,43 | 13,24 | 10,43 |
|  | Every day | 17,84 | 19,16 | 18,53 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |

Source: personal elaboration

**Table 9.6** Time-usage according to gender, 8-year-olds

|  | Rarely or never | Under once a week | Once or twice a week | Every day or nearly every day | I don't know | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Carry out activities after school |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boys | 16,97 | 6,64 | 23,25 | 53,14 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Girls | 19,26 | 4,44 | 27,78 | 48,52 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Total | 18,11 | 5,55 | 25,51 | 50,83 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Read what you like (not as homework) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boys | 13,97 | 11,76 | 25,00 | 49,26 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Girls | 9,12 | 6,20 | 22,63 | 62,04 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Total | 11,54 | 8,97 | 23,81 | 55,68 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Help with the household chores |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boys | 7,83 | 7,47 | 24,91 | 59,79 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Girls | 6,34 | 3,87 | 20,07 | 69,72 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Total | 7,08 | 5,66 | 22,48 | 64,78 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Do your homework |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boys | 3,21 | 2,86 | 13,21 | 80,71 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Girls | 3,55 | 2,48 | 9,22 | 84,75 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Total | 3,38 | 2,67 | 11,21 | 82,74 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Watch TV |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boys | 2,49 | 3,56 | 13,52 | 80,43 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Girls | 1,76 | 4,93 | 13,38 | 79,93 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Total | 2,12 | 4,25 | 13,45 | 80,18 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Practice sports or gym |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boys | 10,39 | 2,51 | 18,64 | 68,46 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Girls | 17,45 | 2,18 | 21,45 | 58,91 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Total | 13,90 | 2,35 | 20,04 | 63,72 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Use the computer |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boys | 13,48 | 7,45 | 17,73 | 61,35 | 0,00 | 100,00 |
| Girls | 9,76 | 7,32 | 20,21 | 62,37 | 0,35 | 100,00 |
| Total | 11,60 | 7,38 | 18,98 | 61,86 | 0,18 | 100,00 |

Source: personal elaboration

number of children do so once or twice a week. Fifty-five percent state that they read extracurricular books, although the girls do so in a higher proportion than the boys. Sixty-four percent declare that they help with the household chores – the girls, again, in a higher proportion. Around 80% of the children express that they do their homework and watch TV in similar proportions by gender. Regarding sports practice and their use of the computer, around 60% of the cases state that they carry out those activities every day.

## 9.4.3   Your Life, the Facts of Life, and Your Future

About their lives in general and their expectations for the future 8-year-old boys and girls, 80% completely agree with the fact that they are doing well in their lives (see Table 9.7). When asked whether their lives are what they would like them to be, 64,44% completely agreed. To the question whether they have a good life, 86% completely agree; 68% completely agree to the fact that they have what they want from life, and 77% com-

**Table 9.7**  Personal outlook on life according to gender, 8-year-olds

|  |  | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| My life is alright | I disagree | 1,40 | 0,70 | 1,05 |
|  | I hardly agree | 1,40 | 2,46 | 1,93 |
|  | I more or less agree | 5,61 | 2,81 | 4,21 |
|  | I quite agree | 11,93 | 10,53 | 11,23 |
|  | I completely agree | 79,65 | 83,51 | 81,58 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |
| My life is what I want it to be | I disagree | 4,30 | 4,50 | 4,40 |
|  | I hardly agree | 3,23 | 3,11 | 3,17 |
|  | I more or less agree | 9,32 | 9,34 | 9,33 |
|  | I quite agree | 18,64 | 18,69 | 18,66 |
|  | I completely agree | 64,52 | 64,36 | 64,44 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |
| I have a good life | I disagree | 0,69 | 0,68 | 0,69 |
|  | I hardly agree | 2,42 | 1,02 | 1,72 |
|  | I more or less agree | 3,46 | 3,07 | 3,26 |
|  | I quite agree | 7,96 | 8,19 | 8,08 |
|  | I completely agree | 85,47 | 87,03 | 86,25 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |
| I have what I want from life | I disagree | 4,30 | 2,43 | 3,35 |
|  | I hardly agree | 2,51 | 2,08 | 2,29 |
|  | I more or less agree | 9,32 | 8,68 | 8,99 |
|  | I quite agree | 18,28 | 15,63 | 16,93 |
|  | I completely agree | 65,59 | 71,18 | 68,43 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |
| My life is excellent | I disagree | 2,14 | 2,09 | 2,11 |
|  | I hardly agree | 1,78 | 3,14 | 2,46 |
|  | I more or less agree | 4,27 | 5,23 | 4,75 |
|  | I quite agree | 15,30 | 11,50 | 13,38 |
|  | I completely agree | 76,51 | 78,05 | 77,29 |
|  | Total | 100,00 | 100,00 | 100,00 |

Source: personal elaboration

pletely agree that their lives are excellent. The girls show more positive points than the boys.

## 9.5    Conclusions

The application of the questionnaire in different districts of the Province of Buenos Aires (both urban and rural), has shown significant results in the dimensions selected for this article: friends, use of free time and life, the facts of life and the future.

Concerning friendship, 66% of the 8 years old boys and girls indicated to completely agree with respect to the kindness of their friends while 75% said that they have sufficient amount of friends.

About the use of free time, half of the children carry out after school activities nearly every day, and a quarter of them once or twice a week. Fifty-five percent say that they read books (other than their text-books), though the girls do so in a higher proportion than the boys. Around 80% state that they do their homework and watch TV, in similar proportions according to gender. Regarding sports practice and computer use, around 60% of the subjects point out that they indulge in them nearly every day.

About their life, the facts of their life, and their future, 80% totally agree with the lives they lead, while 64,44% express that their lives are completely in accordance with what they want them to be. On the other hand, 86% completely agree to the fact that they have a good life. As to the question of having what they want from life, the percentage is 68%, while 77% assert that their lives are excellent. The girls show a few more positive points than the boys. Regarding their degree of happiness, 80% of the 8-year-old boys and girls asserted that they were completely happy.

Finally note that the fundamental concern of the work derives from understanding that, as Sen (1998) says, improving the quality of life of children, influenced by education, safety, prevention of trauma, can be a crucial part of development;

indeed, the quality of childhood is important not only for what happens in childhood but also for future life.

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# Recreation, Free Time and Well-Being According to Children and Adolescents in Chile: Mediator Meanings of Satisfaction

**10**

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### Abstract

This chapter contributes to the field of subjective well-being in childhood and adolescence, analyzing the meanings of recreation and use of free time and its relationship with life satisfaction from the perspective of Chilean children and adolescents aged between 10 and 18 years.Subjective Well-being is understood as a contingent, culturally anchored social construction that is dynamically produced and transformed in the socio-cultural context. In this report, we integrate analyzes of information produced in two studies, in which a descriptive design was followed and purpo-sive sampling was used. We present the results raised from the participation of a total of 106 Chilean children and adolescents, of both sexes and different social contexts, through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. For the purpose of analysis, one of the two studies used the technique of content analysis, while in the other the analysis was performed following the open coding orientations of the Grounded Theory. The results show that well-being, in relation to free time, is mediated by the possibility of feeling free, in contrast to day-to-day duties, in which satisfaction and dissatisfaction is related to the possibility of

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having personal time, as well as meeting with loved ones, such as family and friends. In addition, the power of seeing new places, having contact with nature and having out-of-the-ordinary experiences are valued.

## 10.1 Introduction

There has been increased interest in investigating subjective well-being in different groups, as a way to understand and assess the quality of life in a specific population and to empirically validate the necessary conditions for "living well" (Veenhoven 2002). Knowledge of the subjective well-being of a population favors political decision-making that is sensitive to people's concerns and that favors positive mental health, thus promoting comprehensive development.

The study of subjective well-being allows us to understand the factors that positively affect the development of children and adolescents, and to familiarize ourselves with the factors related to individual differences and their aftermath (Seligson et al. 2005), as well as the identification of risk subgroups (Tomyn and Cummins 2011). This is particularly relevant in Latin American contexts, where well-being research in child and adolescent populations has not yet been sufficiently produced (Alfaro, et al. 2015; Webb 2009). In the same way, subjective well-being is understood as a culturally anchored contingent social construction that is dynamically produced and transformed in the socio-cultural context (Crivello et al. 2009), necessitating the study of meanings that mediate the experience of life satisfaction.

Individuals state that one of the most relevant dimensions for their subjective well-being is recreation and the use of free time. Some leisure activities, such as exercise, music and reading, significantly contribute to happiness (Argyle 2002). Moreover, leisure satisfaction constitutes a predictor of happiness (Balatsky and Diener 1993). Similarly, Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006) report that among the relevant factors for increasing young people's happiness are passive recre-

ation, such as watching television or surfing the internet; and active recreation, such as exercising or having a hobby.

In order to contribute to an understanding of well-being in children and adolescents by integrating the cultural dimension, as well as contributing to the available knowledge on the dynamics that affect the well-being of Latin American children and adolescents, it is necessary to integrate the intersubjectively constructed world. Regarding this, Díaz et al. (2011) emphasize the need to contribute to the study of well-being by integrating dimensions that go beyond individual factors, bearing the particular cultural references and meanings that participate in the evaluation and assessment of life satisfaction in light of their life circumstances.

Thus, we assume the relevance and need to progress in the development of a research program that allows us to understand the multicultural determinants that produce the opinions and assessments made by children and adolescents about what they understand by well-being, and the issues that are related to this construct (Casas and Bello 2012). Particularly, we look at well-being, which is understood as a culturally anchored social construction that changes over time, both in terms of individual life-course changes and changes in the socio-cultural context where it is produced (Crivello et al. 2009). This highlights the influence of culture on life courses (Lombardo and Krzemien 2008), and considers that the life cycle is strongly affected by social interactions within a particular culture (Hammack 2008), assigning a central role in the development of the individual mind to the cultural context (Cole 1996).

In addition, assuming that recreation and use of free time is a relevant dimension for subjective well-being, so that among young people, satisfaction with recreation constitutes a predictor of happiness (Balatsky and Diener 1993) and, as we gather from Liu and Yu (2014), people who participate in leisure and recreation activities have, on average, greater well-being in all dimensions of the subjective well-being index, it is relevant to consider the role that cultural meanings play in this relationship.

Considering also, as we gather from Elizalde and Gomes (2010), that leisure should be understood as a cultural creation and a complex and historically situated social practice. Rather, it is a singular expression of culturally produced meanings, participating in the complex historical-social plot that characterizes life in society, and is one of the threads woven in the human network of meanings, symbols and significations. Built in a time/space of human production, dialogue, influencing and being influenced by the other spheres of life in society, which will allow us to continually reframe the culture.

In this context, we ask ourselves about cultural meanings, understood as the unit that integrates opinions, evaluations, assessments, and perceptions regarding daily life experiences that mediate the relationship between, on the one hand, recreation and free time and, on the other hand, the assessment of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the lives of Chilean children and adolescents aged from 10 to 18 years.

### 10.1.1  Notion and Relevance of the Study of Satisfaction and Well-Being in Childhood and Adolescence

The study of well-being has taken on a special scientific interest in recent decades, in the context in which the improvement of people's quality of life acquires relevance for public policies directed towards different populations, advancing with respect to perspectives that reduce their mission to economistic aspects, focused on the improvement of basic living conditions. This, in the broader context of social sciences, allows for the overcoming of the exclusive consideration of objective factors about well-being, thus placing it in the field of human development promotion and quality of life (Casas 2000; Veenhoven 1994).

The notion of Subjective Well-Being refers to positive or negative perceptions, assessments, judgments, and aspirations that people have regarding their lives. This includes both assessments of overall life satisfaction, as well as particular life areas, integrating emotional processing aspects to this cognitive component, which involves feelings and emotions (Petito and Cummins 2000; Diener 2006). Subjective well-being, although not exactly the same, is related to concepts such as Happiness, Quality of Life, Personal Well-being and Life Satisfaction (Casas and Bello 2012).

From the notion of Life Satisfaction, we understand that Subjective Well-Being gives an account of a person's overall assessment of their quality of life in light of their own circumstances (Seligson et al. 2003). This global assessment of a person's quality of life is understood as the life satisfaction that the person experiences (Seligson, et al. 2003), thus accounting for the degree to which they positively, cognitively evaluate their life as a whole (Veenhoven 1994), or in relation to specific areas such as family, friends, and school (Huebner 2004; Seligson et al. 2005), among others, which is relative to a present state, although not momentary (Veenhoven 1994).

The relevance of the notion of Subjective Well-Being is related to the fact that it allows us to understand and assess the quality of life developed in a country or in a specific group and, therefore, it contributes to the design of actions aimed at achieving this, allowing to empirically validate necessary conditions for "living well", and for reporting what constitutes a "good society", thus facilitating the design of social development strategies (Veenhoven 1994, 2002).

Moreover, Seligson et al. (2003) establish four advantages of the concept of Subjective Well-Being: (1) to integrate psychological and sociological with medical and rehabilitation perspectives; (2) highlighting and accessing multiple determining factors, including personal, community, and structural factor dimensions; (3) allowing for the activation of conditions for healthy behaviors, and thereby contributing to the implementation of promotion and rehabilitation actions; and finally, (4) it allows for the development of a sensitive tool to assess the capacity of interventions, in order to influence health/illness problems.

International research also shows that high life satisfaction is positively related to physical and mental health, good interpersonal relationships,

and educational and professional success (Park 2004). In addition, it is related to the absence of risk behaviors such as substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs), violence, aggression and sexual victimization (Proctor et al. 2009). In contrast, lower life satisfaction among adolescents is related to various psychological and social problems, such as depressive symptoms, violent and aggressive behavior, substance abuse, suicide attempts, suicidal thoughts, low self-esteem, and lack of harmony in relationships (Valois et al. 2009, 2004; Zullig et al. 2001). Other studies have indicated the possible role of life satisfaction as a buffer against the negative effects of stress and the development of psychopathological behaviors (Suldo and Huebner 2004).

In this way, understanding the dynamics associated with subjective well-being and/or life satisfaction generates valuable information about potential risks, in terms of the measures of these constructs having predictive capacity regarding depressive states and the management of stressful life events, as well as their effects on behavioral problems (Seligson et al. 2005). Thus, enhancing the understanding of well-being correlations and associated constructs, such as life satisfaction, for example, makes it possible to guide actions towards its elevation and improvement (Gademann et al. 2010). This, in addition, allows us to systematically understand the factors related to individual differences in the perception of well-being and its effects (Huebner and Gilman 2002; Seligson et al. 2003, 2005), as well as the identification of risk subgroups as a function of ensuring the adequate provision of support and resources to those who need it (Tomyn and Cummins 2011).

Another relevant dimension to highlight, in order to assess the importance of the development of well-being studies in children and adolescents, is related to the fact that, in comparison with research on well-being among adults, the development of research and tools for children and adolescents is incipient and is notoriously less developed (Casas and Bello 2012; Dex and Hollingworth 2012; Gademann et al. 2010; Huebner 2004; Seligson et al. 2003; Tomyn and Cummins 2011). This is particularly important,

considering that the available data in children and adolescents show that during the earliest stages of life, well-being functioning has its own evolutionary idiosyncrasies, thus it cannot be assumed that the results from adult samples can be extrapolated to younger populations, although they belong to the same sociocultural context (Casas 2010).

### 10.1.2 Advances in Qualitative Studies on Well-Being and Life Satisfaction in Childhood and Adolescence

Following Crivello and collaborators (2009), the well-being of children and adolescents must be understood as a contingent social construction, where the cultural frameworks and meaning processes to which they are anchored have particular relevance and are fundamental to be included in the study of well-being. Thus, for a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the perceptions and experiences involved in well-being, it is important to consider the cultural meanings that give context to subjective experiences of satisfaction (Thoilliez 2011; Delle Fave et al. 2011; Camfield et al. 2009a; Crivello et al. 2009).

The development of studies of this nature would generate a network of connections of the meanings and different dimensions of this construct, located within the framework of everyday symbolic exchange relationships in the social and cultural environment to which children belong (Thoilliez 2011; Delle fave et al. 2011; Camfield et al. 2009a). This integration, in dialogue with information from quantitative-based empirical studies, provides greater strength to the field of well-being studies and its related concepts (Camfield et al. 2009a; Delle Fave et al. 2011). For Camfield et al. (2009a), qualitative studies in this field can contribute to the priority need for progress in the development of intercultural research, which according to Casas et al. (2015), are top priority in the current state of development in this field.

Research on well-being, understood as a subjective experience, is oriented towards a more holistic paradigm, centered on the person and the

dynamic understanding of life, taking its socio-cultural contexts into account (Camfield et al. 2009b). In this respect, the contribution of qualitative approaches becomes important, which allows us to focus on people's resources and agency, allowing us to explore the areas of life that are influential and important, but which are not usually systematically studied (Crivello et al. 2009).

There have been important advances in this area, which support a perspective that emphasizes the cultural diversity of the experience of well-being and life satisfaction, such as the study of children and adolescents between 8 and 15 years of age, belonging to urban and rural localities in New South Wales (Australia). This study, from an ethnographic phenomenological approach, sought to understand the factors that children identify as being relevant to their well-being (Fattore et al. 2007). To this respect, the main results show that well-being is associated with the capacity to act freely, to make decisions and influence daily situations; while in contrast, children report that fear and insecurity affect their well-being. Moreover, they associate well-being with positive self-assessment, and they emphasize the importance of having goals and aspiring to be well in the future; while at the same time they value access to material and cultural goods. It is also important to note that for this population, well-being is related to the possibility of having physical spaces that allow them to carry out leisure activities, highlighting the importance of parks and green areas. In relational terms, the adult figure that supports them and allows them to learn new things seems to be relevant, and from these secure relationships they feel able to exercise their agency and take on new risks.

Furthermore, in the framework of the "Millennium Children" study, which corresponds to an international project on child poverty in different countries between 2000 and 2015, (Crivello et al. 2009), which used participatory methods to explore the notions of well-being, report that the key issues common to all communities refer to the importance of family support, education and recreation, the type of social relationships and good behavior. Likewise, Camfield et al. (2009a) report that for Vietnamese children, well-being is

associated with having a healthy and disease-free life, as well as being loved by their parents and people around them. Their discomfort is described as a life without family, a home and parent's love, the latter is related to being beaten by parents and not being cared for when they are sick. Among the concerns expressed by these children are that their siblings can attend school, their families have enough to eat, and that their parents do not fall out with each other.

Crivello et al. (2009) also report that in the case of Ethiopian children, well-being is associated with the possibility of themselves and their friends attending school, and being healthy. Likewise, it relates to them finishing their studies with good results to be able to help their parents, to have a harmonious family, to get married and to have children. In contrast, children in rural areas have no expectations to continue their studies due to distance and cost. Moreover, all these children associate well-being with the possibility of covering basic needs, including having sufficient food. Likewise, it is important for them to attend school and have the necessary support to continue their studies (for example, time to study and sufficient materials), also, to have time to play with other children and having material resources, such as footballs. In the case of their unsatisfactory experiences in the family, these refer to parents getting divorced or sick, and having to live apart from them. In the case of school, discomfort is associated with the long distance to school or having to leave before the end of the school day to go to work.

For Peruvian children, the family is the main source of well-being, specifically the presence, love and support of parents. By contrast, the lack of one or both parents creates insecurity, especially for girls who feel more vulnerable. Family well-being is associated with the ability to feel understood and cared for by adults, whereas discomfort is associated with feeling that they are not cared for. For example, that they do not have clean clothes or that they can't brush their hair. At the same time, discomfort is associated with conditions of poverty, such as the lack of basic services, as well as the use of drugs and alcohol. In addition, girls expressed fear of sexual abuse,

especially in rural areas, while working in the countryside (Crivello et al. 2009).

In a mixed-type study conducted with children aged 6–12 years in three localities in Spain, which sought to describe the factors that make children feel happy and sad in their daily lives, Thoilliez (2011) emphasizes that the family is the environment that generates the most happiness, especially feeling loved and cared for, but in turn, it is within this area where most children experience sadness, associated with experiences of scolding, divorce or death of a parent. Moreover, the importance of relationships with friends is emphasized, generating happiness when feeling accepted by others, and conversely, sadness is associated with feeling rejected. And as a third important factor, children refer to their life at school, focusing mainly on their academic achievements as an aspect that makes them feel happy and, as a counterpart, sadness is associated with failure in exams.

Taking the above into account, the study of meaning systems, values and senses involved in subjective experiences and assessment of being well contributes to the development of Subjective Well-being research in childhood and adolescence, allowing us to familiarize ourselves with how children understand and give meaning to their life experiences within specific social and cultural structures (Camfield et al. 2009b).

This is even more relevant if we consider that, although in the last 25 years, progress has been made in the perspectives that socially, culturally and politically assume children as subjects, we still look at the issue of childhood from a traditional perspective, that is, seen with the eyes of "when we were children" (Torres 2015, p. 113). For the moment, the results of the third report titled "Childhood Counts Chile 2015" (Infancia Cuenta Chile 2015), carried out by the Observatory of Childhood and Adolescence, reinforces this need, highlighting the continued invisibility of children and adolescents and the lack of tools to produce information and recreate spaces where children and adolescents express themselves (Sepúlveda et al. 2015).

In understanding the scope of this perspective, the approaches of Vygotsky (1979) on individual and social development play a central role. In particular, the notion that "in the child's cultural development, every function appears twice: first, at the social level, and later at the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then, inside the child themselves (intrapsychological)" (Vygotsky 1979, p. 94). This implies that knowledge emerges from social interactions and is then internalized (Chadwick 1999). This, for Lombardo and Krzemien (2008), means that human development arises in the socio-cultural environment where the individual lives.

From this perspective, everyday activities that influence life processes and their evaluation are first organized culturally, in such a way that cultural senses and meanings (artifacts) act as restrictions and/or tools for human actions (Cole 1996). They also affect human mental development by providing essential resources and tools for understanding their social and material environment (Cole 1996).

Regarding the notion of "Subjective Sense", we first point out that the notion of subjectivity, understood as the symbolic-emotional unit produced in the course of social experience, which was significantly developed by Vygostky (González Rey 2008), emphasizes that the individual psychic organization (which can include assessment, evaluative judgments and organization of the subjective experience in general), takes place in and from the social and historical experience of individuals (Vygostky 1992). It is important to point out that individuals' actions are inseparable from their intersubjective production. Thus, as González Rey (2008) adds, it must be understood that subjectivity represents the specificity of human mental processes in culture conditions, so that subjective configurations represent dynamical developing systems that express the organization of subjectivity in its historical path.

As Blanco and Díaz (2005) point out, people's well-being must be understood as intersubjectively constructed (p. 583), and in turn, social action, the feeling of belonging and social participation must be considered as relevant aspects to address the study of people's well-being (Díaz et al. 2011). Based on this perspective, as was

already mentioned at the beginning of this section, well-being, and satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessments with living conditions that it entails, with regards to subjective production, can be understood as a culturally anchored social construction, which is produced and transformed as a dynamic and contingent relationship with the socio-cultural context (Crivello et al. 2009).

### 10.1.3   Recreation, Free Time and Well-Being in Childhood and Adolescence

Elizalde and Gómes (2010) point out that the most widespread and legitimized word in Spanish-speaking Latin America is recreation, not leisure, a concept that represents a waste of time on unproductive activities. Therefore, although in this study we approach the theme from the point of view of recreation, we manage our own definitions of leisure to respect the idiosyncrasy and the concept of free time.

Free time is described by Argyle 2002) as the activities that people perform by choice for their own benefit, fun, personal development, and for their own goals, and not for material gain or benefit. At the same time, Munné and Codina (1996) argue that the deep sense of leisure is free time, which is manifested when "leisure activities respond to self-conditioned but not hetero-conditioned behavior" (p. 432). From this perspective, "rest becomes a joy in itself, fun becomes the pleasure of recreation, and personal development the enjoyment of our creative power" (p. 432).

Following Newman et al. (2013), free time is defined as a multidimensional construct, covering both structural aspects, in which leisure is structured by time or activity, and subjective aspects, in which we have the perception of participating in free time. According to this model, both structural and subjective aspects of leisure are related to the subjective well-being of leisure through similar psychological mechanisms.

From the review of 363 research articles linking leisure and Subjective Well-being, Newman et al. (2013) propose 5 psychological mechanisms to explain the effects of leisure on subjective well-being: (1) detachment-recovery by referring that leisure produces the detachment of work and also helps people to separate the pressures of life and, therefore, producing more positive cognitions and emotions; (2) Autonomy, referring to how leisure generates intrinsic motivation, where people gain in living and in developing autonomous motivations and practices; (3) Mastery, whereby leisure-related practices encompass activities that challenge people and provide opportunities for self-learning; (4) meaning, insofar as leisure activities have their own sense and meaning, where decisions of leisure activities are a means by which individuals acquire something important or valuable in life; (5) affiliation, as leisure activities can be social, thus satisfying affiliation needs that in themselves produce greater subjective well-being. In such a way that today leisure is a valuable dimension recognized as a preferred area that is part of and contributes to the development of personal well-being in this way, as a factor that allows for the improvement of a person's life (Sasia and De la Cruz 2007).

Thus, leisure presents itself as a space which aspires to have everything that work time denies, such as freedom, fulfillment and enjoyment (Sasia and De la Cruz 2007), in which significant activities are carried out in which individuals gain something important or valuable for their lives and, as Iwasaki (2007) points out, are associated with subjective well-being, understood as those that enable the improvement of a person's life. This is especially relevant in children and adolescents, who practice leisure that – unlike other activities of their daily life – is composed of activities with a higher degree of self-choice, which are an expression of their self and identity and, at the same time, they are constructors of their own self and identity (Castrechini et al. 2014; Freire 2013).

In the literature it is possible to find distinctions between Active Leisure activities, such as sports, hobbies, music or social relations; and Passive Leisure activities, such as watching television, playing video games, among others

(Argyle 2002; Tkach and Lyubomirsky 2006). And in turn, we find the definition of Serious Leisure, which is understood as the "systematic pursuit of deep satisfaction through amateur sports, hobbies, or volunteering, that the participants consider substantial and interesting, in that they allow to acquire and express abilities, knowledge and special expressions (Stebbins 1992, p. 3), in addition to bestowing personal gratifications on different dimensions of the person such as: personal development, personal expression, enrichment of self-image, personal gratification, recreation and personal regeneration. In turn, they grant social gratifications: group work, group achievements, contribution to maintaining and developing group activities (Stebbins 2004, p. 64).

Another relevant component for the analysis of the link between well-being and free time, leisure and recreation, is to consider the role that cultural meanings play in this relationship. Following Elizalde and Gomes (2010), leisure must be understood as a cultural creation and a complex and historically situated social practice. So that leisure is not an isolated phenomenon, in the sense of being detached from a social context, a cultural group and its practices, values, and worldview, etc., but rather, it is a particular and singular manifestation and expression of senses and meanings, culturally produced/reproduced by people in their relationships with the world. In such a way that leisure participates in the complex historical-social plot that characterizes life in society, and is one of the threads woven in the human network of meanings, symbols and significations. From where leisure involves "production" of culture – in the sense of reproduction, construction and transformation of cultural practices recreationally experienced by individuals, groups, companies and institutions. Built in a time/space of human production, dialogue, and influencing and being influenced by other spheres of social life, which will continuously resignify the culture.

Thus, leisure has a marked social and cultural character, as indicated by Freire (2013), and cited by Castrechini et al. (2014). Leisure has a marked subjective sense and is part of the self and iden-

tity construction process, developed in the context of social structures. Giving priority in this way to the experience of the activity implicated in leisure, over the same activity, so as to integrate this experience in personal (intra), social (inter) and ecological (environmental) levels. Integrating in this way, the evaluations that from society are made from leisure activities, which range between the norm and the deviation.

One of the relevant dimensions for people's subjective well-being is recreation and use of free time. Satisfaction in recreation or leisure activities is defined as the positive perceptions or feelings that a subject earns as a result of their participation in the choice of leisure activities. Therefore, it is understood as the degree to which one is currently content or satisfied with his/her experiences of leisure and general situations (Codina et al. 2016).

Leung and Lee (2005) report on a positive relationship between participation in recreational physical activities and subjective well-being (Leung and Lee 2005), which is supported by the results provided by Lloyd and Auld (2002) where they add the positive relationship between social activities (frequency of visiting friends, going out with friends) and well-being.

One of the dimensions relevant to people's subjective well-being is recreation and use of free time. Some leisure activities, such as exercise, music and reading, contribute significantly to different aspects of well-being, especially in positive affections and states of happiness, as well as in mental and physical health, with the added value of being an aspect of everyday life, susceptible to personal control, as chosen activities (Argyle 2002). In addition, in young people, satisfaction with recreation is a predictor of happiness (Balatsky and Diener 1993). As reported by Liu and Yu (2014), people involved in leisure activities and "Serious Leisure" have on average greater well-being in all dimensions of the subjective well-being index of the International Well- Being Group (2006).

Likewise, Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006) report that among the factors that are relevant to increasing the happiness of young people are passive recreation, such as watching television or

surfing the internet, and active recreation, such as exercising or having a hobby. Specifically, these researchers assessed the activities carried out by 500 students of different ethnicities to maintain or increase their happiness, finding that within the eight assessed strategies (social affiliation, achievement of objectives, and religious practices, among others), activities carried out actively in free time "active leisure" were one of the strong predictors of the current happiness of the participants. In contrast, "passive leisure" was not significantly correlated with happiness. It was also reported in relation to gender differences, that while men prefer to engage in active activities in their free time, women are inclined to participate in passive activities.

As Sasia and De la Cruz (2007) point out, well-being, associated with the experience of leisure, has a subjective component that cannot be forgotten, since we can affirm that if leisure has a value in itself, that value does not exist independently of what people give it, thus their meanings depend on cultural, social and personal factors. It is because of all of this that it becomes interesting and contributes to the field of well-being to describe and understand the meanings that children and adolescents have of being well, of being satisfied or dissatisfied, as well as describing and understanding the meanings that participate and give meaning to the experience of recreation and use of free time, and link it with life satisfaction, considering the context and social meanings. Therefore, based on this background, we wonder: What are the cultural meanings that mediate the assessment of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with free time and recreation of Chilean children and adolescents aged between 10 and 18 years?

## 10.2   Method

### 10.2.1   Methodological Approach

The present chapter was based on the integration made by the authors in relation to the theme of free time, recreation and its relationship with life satisfaction, of data generated in two different studies regarding the meanings associated with subjective well-being in Chilean children and adolescents. Both studies had a qualitative methodological approach (Denman and Haro 2002), of the descriptive-exploratory type, aimed at studying the meanings, regarding subjective production that occurs in everyday conditions. The notion of social meanings is understood as the inseparable unit of symbolic processes, which are configured around intersubjectively produced cultural spaces. Defining, in this way, cultural meanings as the unit of analysis that integrates opinions, assessments, evaluations, and perceptions regarding everyday life experiences that, in the case of this research, mediate the relationship between individuals' cognitive processes (children and adolescents) relative to the experience of being well, of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and recreation and free time, while at the same time, form an integral part and circulate as legitimate components accepted in the sociocultural contexts of belonging.

For the investigation of these cultural meanings, in the first study,[1] an open, unstructured and emerging research strategy was conducted, integrating topics, issues and content raised during the information production process (Mella 1998). Meanwhile, the second study was carried out following the procedures described in the Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967).[2]

### 10.2.2   Participants

In the first study, 77 Chilean children and adolescents aged between 10 and 14 years participated. Of these, 39 were children aged between 10 and 12, and 38 between 13 and 14, of whom 41 were

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female and 36 male. Regarding the second study, for purposes of this chapter, data of a subsample of participants were selected, where information is shown regarding free time and its link with Subjective Well-being. In the present chapter, relevant data according the selected topic is integrated, showing the perspective of 29 adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years, of which 14 were male and 15 female, participants from five focus groups.

A purposive sampling strategy was used for both studies (Patton 1990). Among the selection criteria participants from different schools or social organizations were considered, which varied depending on their funding and orientation, whether methodological, political or religious, and belonged to different socioeconomic levels.

### 10.2.3 Instruments

In both the first and the second study the focus group technique was used, following a semi-structured guideline to guide the conversation regarding different topics related to well-being. In addition, in the first study, open semi-structured interviews were conducted and, in addition, a methodological tool that incorporates drawing and group performances in order to facilitate the expression of under age children was designed (Crivello et al. 2009).

### 10.2.4 Procedures

In the first study, contact and fieldwork in five schools and in groups of teenagers was carried out and the second was done with adolescents from three schools and two social organizations, both considering the mentioned inclusion criteria and based on intentional sampling. At each location, a brief presentation of the research team and the objectives of the study was carried out to all children and adolescents. After this presentation, the participation of volunteers for interviews and focus group were requested, provided that they had informed parental consent. The letter of consent given to parents and informed consent for children and adolescents were approved by the

Ethics Committee of the Universidad Central de Chile and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, for each of the studies respectively.

### 10.2.5 Data Analysis Procedures

For the purposes of this chapter, a descriptive analysis was carried out by specifically selecting the corresponding information to the theme of free time and recreation and their relationship to well-being. Data were organized into emergent categories and subcategories according to the open coding procedures of the Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 2002).

For this we made preliminary encodings to have a manageable subgroup of data, choosing the passages referring to what they like/do not like; what satisfies them / dislikes, during their free time, together with considering the pleasant situations that they associate with recreation, to generate the descriptive categories with respect to the mediators of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with free time.

### 10.3 Results

Regarding the mediator meanings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of children and adolescents with free time, we found seven categories: (1) Value of personal time**;** (2) the value of spending time with family; (3) the value of meeting with friends; (4) changes in routine; (5) value of freedom to choose what to do; (6) value of being outdoors; and (7) value of sporting activities.

### 10.3.1 Value of Personal Time

Satisfaction with free time for all age groups is associated with the possibility of participating in activities that they like, such as dancing, listening to music or writing, and having time to dedicate to themselves, enabling them to think and to connect with their own emotions, as seen in the following quotes:

FP[3]: listening to music, I love listening to music.

I[4]: Is it what most makes you feel good?

FP: Listening, singing. Things like that. And more than anything I like to write. As I have a great imagination, you could say (Interview, girl, 13 years).

MP[5]: For me at least, give me space to reflect and... space for myself.

(...)

FP: For me, it's having time to myself (...)

I: How to spend time with yourself?

FP: I don't know, do something I like, I don't know. Light incense and start to read, or go for a walk or lie on the grass, but alone.

(...)

MP: I, at least at the beginning of the year, started doing yoga, and that for me gave me a place to meet people. And I also play a lot of instruments, dedicating time to singing, playing something, thinking about and concentrating on that for me, it gives me time to myself. (Focal Group, 15 to 18 year age group).

### 10.3.2  The Value of Spending Time with Family

For children and adolescents, satisfaction with free time is related to the ability to meet and quietly spend time with the family, as outlined in the following quote:

I: Is there anything else you like?

MP: Holidays

I: What do you like about holidays?

MP: That we are all together, calm ... I can spend all day with my mom and I don't have to run around to get things done; but my sister gets angry because she says I stick to my mom all day (Interview, boy, 11 years).

Similarly, they value the possibility of spending time with the family doing different types of activities, such as hiking, horseback riding, board games or even doing housework, which means to be together, as expressed in the following quotes:

FP: so I leave the phone and spend more time with family, for example we play table tennis, stuff like that. Monopoly games, and I suppose, we clean the whole house and it is nice and it stays like that (interview, girl, 11 years).

FP: Holidays [laughs].

FP: For me for example, going on holiday too and, I don't know, for example ... it's just that my Dad every Saturday goes to the countryside, and there I sometimes go with him because I love the country, and we go horseback riding because that's what I "love",... Or swimming ... (Focal group, age group 15 to 18 years).

Especially for children aged 10–14 years, satisfaction with free time, in turn, is associated with the ability to meet and spend time with the extended family, as expressed in the following quote:

MP: When we all get together (...) there is an uncle who is super fun, when we're all sharing, having tea, when we go for a walk with the whole family.

I: And when you say with the whole family, is it not just some of them?

MP: No, everyone.

I: Who is everyone?

MP: My uncles, my aunts, everyone. My grandfather, everyone (Interview, boy, 13 years).

### 10.3.3  The Value of Meeting with Friends

For children and adolescents, satisfaction with free time is associated with the ability to meet with friends, independent of the activity being performed. As is noted in the following quotes:

FP: My spare time is ... what I do or what I need to do in my spare time, is to definitely be with friends, no matter where, do whatever with a friend. Em, have fun, we have ideas, play football or something. Playing, I don't know, with something, with the computer, something like that. Doing anything (group interview, age group 13 to 14 years).

In this sense, the possibility of being with others is valued, and can be found through games, conversation or mere company, either in public

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[3]Female participant.

[4]Interviewer.

[5]Male participant.

spaces such as mountains or the beach, or private such as someone's house. As expressed in the following quotes:

MP: it's just that painting, for example, for me, my basic life philosophy is sharing. I go and buy paint and go to paint with my friends and say "Hey, could you give me some?" And I say "of course, take it without hesitation," or for example, you know, I bring a packed lunch and they ask me for some and I give them some, because for me it's something very basic.

I: to share ...?

MP: yes, to share, that's what makes you happy because, heck, drinking a soft drink on your own, is boring. But having a soft drink with three friends, even though in the end you drink less ...

MP: it's better. (Focal Group, 15 to 18 year age group)

I: And you? How do you have fun?

MP: We go up to the hills, we go to the city center, to the beach, I'll stay at their house, watch movies, play playstation, we tell each other things.

MP: But it's not only that, for example, in our case, just to be in the same room [with someone else] is enough, and we're ok, you don't need to be doing anything (group interview, 13 to 14 year age group).

Children aged between 10 and 14 years, although they value the possibility of meeting friends and doing any kind of activity, they indicate that the most used type of meetings are through games. As expressed in the following quotes:

I: perfect. So, you know them for a long time. And what do you do with your friends?

MP: more than anything we play, when we're all together nothing but playing matters.

I: And what do you play?

MP: video games, we also play when we don't have the console or here at school, we invent games (boy, 11 years).

I: ok, you play in the alley and what do you do with friends?

MP: We play ... catch/tag, or sometimes football (group interview, age group 10 to 12 years).

In turn, adolescents between 15 and 18 years, valued as being satisfactory that during the meeting with friends they have the opportunity to support each other, so different activities that they do in their free time are considered important to promote mutual collaboration.

MP: also, together, I in my spare time I skate and skate with friends, I don't skate alone, eh, but the good thing about skating with friends is supporting each other and why, so to speak, I'm a novice compared to them, and they support me so that I can improve, and learn more things that they know and so I can achieve them. (Focal Group, age group 15 to 18 years).

### 10.3.4 Changes in Routine

For children and adolescents, satisfaction with free time is associated with the possibility of escaping the routine and performing new and pleasurable activities, different from everyday activities, such as travelling or meeting new people.

I: leaving the house, the house where you live normally?

MP: Yes, changing the routine, travelling.

I: changing your routine, travelling, doing those things makes you feel good?

MP: Yes. (Interview, boy, 13 years)

MP: If you participate in a religious organization, to me at least I love it, I have a good time.

I: ok, perfect. Explain it, what does it mean to you this religious organization that helps you want to feel good?

MP: to spend time with others, that makes you feel good. Change the routine, this organization is the opposite of routine, we are used to school and weekend with friends, then school, and weekend with friends. But here you also meet new people, you do new things, for example, I'm not a scout, but I went to camp and it's different, and I liked it... (Focal Group, age group 15 to 18 years).

### 10.3.5  Value of Freedom to Choose What to Do

For children and adolescents, satisfaction with free time and the pleasure associated with it, appears strongly linked to the perception of being able to freely choose the activities to be performed. In this regard, the possibility of having the freedom to perform activities that they like, such as playing or going to the movies, is valued as satisfactory, as indicated in the following quotes:

> I: OK. And what's the best thing about free time?
> MP: Playing.
> FP: Going to the cinema.
> MP: That there is no school (group interview, 10 to 12 year age group).
> MP: I think in all areas, because more than that they are artists, all of them have an independent life and everyone does something that makes them feel good and I see that as life, you do what you like, then maybe there are some who are in front of the computer all day and maybe that makes them happy, good for them, they're doing it. I want to dedicate myself to painting, I want to paint, that will make me happy, that's what I will do. I think it's like that. (Focal Group, 15 to 18 year age group).

Also, for both groups, satisfaction with free time and the pleasure associated with it, appears to be strongly linked to the perception of being able to freely choose the activities to be carried out, as opposed to the performance of duties, especially typical duties from school. In the words of the children:

> MP: Being able to do what we want at that time.
> FP: For me the concept of free time is to enjoy the time you have, enjoy it as much as you can.
> I: Ok. No responsibilities, without duties associated to it.
> FP: Yes, there you relax and do anything (group interview, 13 to 14 year age group)
> I: What does it mean for you to have free time?
> MP: not having tests, not having to study ... if there are no tests for a full week ... oh, relaxation (group interview, 13 to 14 year age group).

In this sense, for teenagers, aged between 15 and 18 years, satisfaction with free time is also associated with the possibility of resting, eating and watching TV.

> I: You said holidays. Why are holidays for you considered as well-being?
> FP: Ah because ... I love being lazy [laughs]. Being able to be lazy, eat and have Netflix [watch TV] at the same time is like ... like ...
> FP: And pizza
> FP: Yes, and especially pizza, it's like the best thing that can happen to me, and during the holidays I can do all those things at once, so for many days together. Then it's like well-being. (Focal Group, 15 to 18 year age group).

Both boys and girls aged 10 and 14 years, as well as teenagers between 15 and 18 state having not enough free time as being unsatisfactory, because they arrive late from school or have homework on weekends, not providing time for activities that they like, as stated in the following quotes:

> I: When do you have free time?
> MP: Never.
> FP: After school.
> FP: At about 6, 7 pm or so.
> MP: We have time, for example, Saturdays and Sundays, because sometimes on weekdays they give us homework.
> FP: During national holidays (group interview, 10 to 12 year age group).
> MP: Yes, we can't do many things during the week, it's usually during the weekend.
> I: Why?
> MP: Because you are tired when you get home.
> MP: Besides sometimes we get homework, they make you read books (group interview, 13 to 14 year age group).

### 10.3.6  The Value of Being Outdoors

For both age groups, they consider the possibility of performing outdoor activities as satisfactory, this is in contrast to activities within their homes. In this sense, the implementation of activities in the private sphere through, for example, the use of technological devices, is presented as a secondary activity in relation to the satisfaction that is generated by outdoor activities. In the words of the children:

> FP: Because we like it, it's better to be outdoors than to be locked up, because if we are locked

up, or we watch TV or if we're glued to the phone, but, if we are outdoors, we have fun.

I: What places do you go to? To enjoy the outdoors?

FP: To the park (girl, 12 years).

FP: Ehh, I don't know. For example, when we go camping for example on a weekend [...] I am very happy in the campsite, because being outdoors ... I love that. (Focus group, 15 to 18 year age group).

### 10.3.7 Value of Sports Activities

Playing sports is one of the activities that bring high satisfaction with regards to free time, in addition to investing a lot of time and motivation. In their words:

I: When you leave school, what do you like? What do you do when you leave school?

MP: Sports.

FP: Yes, I do professional figure skating.

I: And you play sport every day after school?

FP: Yes, every day of the week. Sometimes in the morning or sometimes on Saturdays.

FP: I play bow and arrow. And go swimming. And I want to start doing volleyball and baseball, basketball (Group interview, 10 to 12 year age group).

It is also noteworthy that football appears by far to be the most practiced sport by male children participants in the study, namely:

MP: football is also played between neighbors, there is a Municipal Stadium, where they play matches. I love football, so I play. It has a lot of vegetation and is close to the other kids (interview, boy, 13 years).

MP: And near my house there is a club where I play football and there I play with my friends, there we always play almost every day (Group interview, children 10–12 years).

## 10.4 Conclusion and Discussion

The present study aimed to describe the cultural meanings that mediate the assessment of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with free time and recreation, in a sample of Chilean children and adolescents aged from 10–14 to 15–18 years.

When referring to the meanings that mediate satisfaction with free time and recreation, it allows us to describe the opinions, assessments, evaluations and perceptions of children and adolescents in this area of their daily lives, and in turn, they refer us to legitimate and accepted cultural systems in the contexts of children's belonging.

For both age groups, free time is a factor that provides well-being in two main areas: the individual-personal level and the social-relational level, although we found some different meanings in both groups. Importantly, these areas are not mutually exclusive, i.e., a person can be benefited both at an individual and social level by an activity carried out in their spare time.

For children and adolescents aged between 10 and 18 years, satisfaction with free time is valued because it allows them to find and enjoy themselves by carrying out some activities alone, which helps them to connect with their emotions. As Freire (2013) points out, the use of this time makes it possible for children and adolescents to find themselves and to promote the development of their self and identity.

At the same time, satisfaction with free time is related to the possibility of being able to meet and share with family in a relaxed and unhurried way, allowing them to value this use of free time, of being closer and united. This is especially important in Latin America, because, as Beytia (2016) points out, this region is identified by a type of social relationship and mutual support of particular density, in which the link and the existence of closer ties and reciprocal support in families is central, where the love and help among the closest ones is highly valued, in which they are considered as relevant members of the extended family, such as grandparents, uncles and cousins.

Moreover, from free time the possibility of meeting their peers is also valued, in which satisfaction is associated with being together, independently of the activity. In the 10 to 14-year-old group, however, games predominate as a facilitating medium for the encounter.

For children and adolescents of all ages free time is valued as a space that gives the possibility

of breaking the daily routine and opens the expectation of discovering new places, for example through travel. In turn, it is perceived as a time that allows them to perform activities that pleases them, freely, without having to respond to external pressures.

Likewise, for both age groups, satisfaction attributed to the possibility of developing activities such as games and trips outside of their homes—outdoors and in contact with nature—, is mentioned as important. Among the activities, practicing sports is highly valued during free time. In this sense, children (boys) highly appreciate sport, football in particular, as the favorite and most pleasant device.

Considering these analyzes and the emerging contents from the productions of Chilean children and adolescent participants of this study, the cultural meanings that mediate the assessment of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with free time and recreation, such as subjective production, is anchored in four basic cross cultural meanings:

Firstly, free time is evaluated positively when it is perceived as a way to freedom, that is, when this space provides conditions for activities that go beyond the imposed regulations, for example, homework, which are also perceived as excessive and therefore leave little space for the development of free time, as is declared by children and adolescents.

Secondly, the cultural sense that organizes the experience of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with free time and recreation is that this time enables children and adolescents to find themselves and to perform activities that they like alone, as well as reflecting and thinking.

Thirdly, free time is meant as a space that gives the possibility to break the daily routine and opens the expectation of having new experiences, which are relevant for them to travel and visit other places.

And fourthly, satisfaction with free time is associated with the possibility of setting up a meeting place with others, especially with family and friends, with whom they can share activities, but can also feel supported and accompanied at this stage of their lives.

Thus, well-being in relation to free time is mediated by the possibility of feeling free as opposed to everyday duties, where satisfaction and dissatisfaction are related to the possibility of having personal time, as well as time to meet loved ones such as family and friends. They value also visiting new places and having out-of-the-ordinary experiences.

In relation to the background knowledge available on this topic, it seems relevant to mention the presence of common and shared topics between our study and those reviewed in relation to the notion of well-being for children in different cultures. As we gather from the work of Fattore et al. (2007) and Crivello et al. (2009), well-being is related to the possibility of having physical spaces such as parks and green areas, which allow for contact with nature. Having time to play with other children is also valued.

As well as in studies of Crivello et al. (2009) and Thoilliez (2011), the close relationship with family appears to be central to well-being, where this is relevant when considering that according to our results, satisfaction with free time is associated with the possibility to meet quietly with the family. Moreover, it is a time that is valued because it allows them to be closer and united.

Moreover, as in quantitative studies, we see that activities perceived in a satisfactory way, that could generate happiness, as shown by Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006), are related with passive recreation, such as watching TV or surfing the internet; and active recreation, such as doing exercise or having a hobby.

As reviewed, the meaning of free time and recreation should be understood as a cultural creation and a social practice that acquires particular meanings, culturally produced and reproduced by people in their relationships with the world. This, in the case of our results, coincide with those findings reported by Freire (2013), as cited

by Castrechini et al. (2014), who reported that satisfaction with free time is related to the possibility of developing autonomy and the ability to freely choose activities of interest, as well as satisfying needs of affiliation, leading to greater subjective well-being, and satisfying ecological interests of having contact with the outside world.

Finally, it is very important to systematically continue studying the meanings of well-being regarding free time and other areas of everyday experiences of children and adolescents belonging to different socio-cultural contexts, establishing the common and different meanings in diverse groups, in the frame of their different socio-cultural contexts.

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# Perception of Leisure and Quality of Life of Rural Youths at the Colombian High Andean Mountain

<span style="float:right">**11**</span>

Antonio José López López

**Abstract**

In Colombia and the rest Latin American countries the fundamental purpose of the general welfare of society is addressed, through public policies that also proclaim the search for a better quality of life for all individuals. General social welfare and quality of life are identified and confused, then, as a single objective and a single concept. This conjunction allows the emergence of Communities and social groups invisibilized or visibilized negatively, who lack active and effective participation in decisions that affect or may affect their lives. Is the case of Colombian rural communities, especially their young, who have traditionally lived in conditions of invisibility, poverty, violence and precariousness superior to those experienced in the urban communities. With this reflection, it is intended, through in-depth interviews, to show the perception of the rural young people of Colombia's Andean High Mountain with respect to leisure and the different activities necessary to achieve, through this, to contribute to the enjoyment of what they consider a good life and adequate social well-being. The results allow an approach to the understanding of the senses that the rural youngsters of the Colombian High Andean Mountain assign to quality of life and social welfare, as well as to the relationship between quality of life and leisure.

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## 11.1 Introduction

This reflection is based on the findings of the Doctoral Thesis developed by the author, "Social Construction of Rural Youth and Rural Youth Policies in the Colombian Andean Zone" (López 2010a) within the PhD in Social Sciences, Children and Youth of the University of Manizales and the International Center for Education and Human Development (CINDE) in Colombia, and other studies that derive from it (López 2010b, 2012, 2015a). It is also based on the perceptions about the quality of life of rural youth in the same context, studies developed within the Postdoctoral Degree in Quality of Life of the University-Community Program (UNICOM) of the National

University of Lomas de Zamora in Buenos Aires, Argentina (López 2014a, b, 2015b).

Traditionally it is assumed in Colombia and in the rest of countries of the region, that the goods and social services offered for the collective access of the society, oriented towards the attainment of general social welfare, simultaneously guarantee a better quality of life for each of the individuals and social groups, presumption that is far from being fulfilled. The conditions of poverty and the lack of access to health, education, housing and security services, among others, that live in the rural communities of Colombia are higher than those lived in urban areas. The lack presence of the State is only comparable with the extraordinary activity of illegal groups raised in arms, producers and traffickers of illicit drugs and common delinquency, that for decades are making presence in these spaces.

This is the case of the rural communities of the Colombian High Andean Mountain, lacking the presence of the State, where traditionally their youths are invisibilized or negatively visibilized because of their vulnerability condition, which makes them prone to their forced or voluntary vinculation to groups outside to the institutional legality. They are young people who are impeded to participate actively and effectively in the decisions that affect or can affect their lives, that of their families and the rural community where they are immersed, on account of their non-recognition as subjects or valid social actors to participate.

The context of the research whose findings support this reflection is constituted by the peasant communities of the Altiplano Cundiboyacense conformed by Cundinamarca and Boyacá, 2 of the 32 departments in which Colombia is divided territorially. The field work is carried out in the provinces of Gualivá and Ubaté, at a height above 2700 m above sea level, characterized by an ancestral peasant culture where a wide and varied agricultural, coal and handicraft production takes place. Rural young people, their families and physical spaces, their actions and interactions and sociocultural phenomena object of understanding constitute the sociocultural scene of the investigations.

The findings of these investigations allow, through in-depth interviews, unveil the meanings that young people assign to their daily practices, information that is derived from their subjective experiences in which they collect the assessments about their own existence in relation with the work, study, well-being and quality of life, among other categories.

The purpose of this reflection is to identify and interpret the perceptions that the rural young people of the Andean High Mountain in Colombia have of "leisure" and the activities that they consider necessary to achieve, through "leisure", to contribute to the enjoyment of what they consider a Good Life. The results allow an approach to the understanding of the senses that the rural young people of the High Andean Mountain of Colombia assign to quality of life, as well as to the relation between "quality of life" and "leisure".

From the conceptual point of view an outstanding feature of both leisure and quality of life is the polysemy and dichotomy that characterizes them, possibly derived from the different interpretations that from classical Greece to modernity the authors have elaborated. Leisure is assumed initially as the soul contemplative exercise to which each individual should devote some time, that goes through the negation of leisure understood as not-leisure (nec otium), associated with a working activity which, at the same time, provides benefits, basically economic ones. This activity reaches the humanist leisure associated to a way of being and to perceiving a level of human experience with outstanding events such as self-fulfillment, the access to an unavoidable experience and to the satisfaction of distinct personal needs. Quality of life is a category which, depending on the time and on the socio-cultural context, has been modifying itself, in such a way that the satisfaction of economic and material, as well as individual and collective needs show, at present, a completeness that involves social, economic, cultural and psychological aspects.

In fact, a fundamental characteristic of both concepts is the polysemy and dichotomy that has always distinguished them and still distinguishes them. In this sense, to reflect on the perception that the youngsters from the Colombian High

Andean Mountain have about "leisure" and its relation with "quality of life" implies to be clear about the meanings that are currently assigned to these concepts. To deal with them in greater detail eases the possibility to obtain a better epistemological accurateness that facilitates the way to the understanding of the meanings which these youngsters assume in their everyday life.

## 11.2  Polysemy and Dichotomy of "Leisure" and "Quality of Life"

"Leisure" is linguistically a polysemic term derived from its varied use in researches and actions developed since ancient times in Western Europe, and in modern times in Western Europe and in the United States of North America. This term is currently associated to "free time" and is defined, in general, as the non-performance of any activity or the performance of those instances, activities or functions to which the subject decides to devote to on a voluntary basis. These activities are considered very different from work commitments related to the exertion of a profession or occupation where a stipend is received. They are also very different from those activities essential to life such as eating or sleeping, and from those assumed by the subject as mandatory in the realm of personal, familial or social responsibility, where no economic remuneration is received.

The situation becomes complex when the activities some people carry out for pleasure, relaxation, entertainment or reflection, are the same activities to which other people are devoted because of remunerated work commitments or because they are mandatory or essential activities. This dichotomy blurs the border among leisure, remunerated commitments, non-remunerated mandatory activities and essential tasks; thus, making the situation special for every person. The cases, for example, reading a book, listening to music or carrying out home activities, that can be interchangeably assumed as work commitments from which a remuneration is perceived, as essential or mandatory, due to the personal, familial or social responsibility with which they are approached, or as leisure for pleasure; rest, entertainment or relaxation, which at a definite time, make the individual depend exclusively upon it.

It may also happen that one person carries out an activity for pleasure, leisure, entertainment or relaxation at a given time, and that the same person performs, at another moment, the same activity because it is a good business that provides economic benefits. In the case of the chef who frees himself from his work commitments to cook, in his apartment, a special dish to please his girlfriend on the day they celebrate an anniversary of their love relation and, later, prepares the same dish for the restaurant where he works under a contract to celebrate Valentine's Day. Another case refers to the person that carries out an activity for the pleasure it provides at a certain moment and then carries out the same activity as a non-remunerated mandatory commitment acquired with the society. A similar situation happens with the competing swimmer who frees himself from his weekend training sessions to go out with his family to a summer holiday destination, where he enjoys, with his friends and relatives, a prolonged time in the swimming pool and, a week later, he trains through tiring sessions to represent his country in the Olympic Games.

These hypothetical cases have the distinction between leisure, professional, essential or mandatory activities, just as they are currently assumed, reaffirm their exclusive dependence from the subject who carries them out in a given moment of life.

In the capitalist work culture that is imperative nowadays, one does not work to live but the other way around. It is currently assumed that who does not work, wastes his time because leisure defines that inactivity state that follows work as a preparation to keep on working once the forces are replenished. Accordingly, "the man is seen as a machine whose end is to work and, as a machine, he needs, from time to time, to stop to perform maintenance and recharge the batteries or the fuel deposits, which is done through leisure" (Rullán 1997, p. 173).

With reference to the term "quality of life", although it evidences an interest for its approach since time immemorial, it only emerges as a scientific concern at the middle of the twentieth century when it starts to be used in the various disciplines of Social and Natural Sciences, such as Economics, Education, Health, Politics, Biology and recently in Psychology and in Environmental Sciences. One can say that it is a polysemic term given the variation and combination of approaches used in the evolution of the concept within each of these disciplines.

Quality of life is currently defined as the expression of people in their everyday life. At the beginning, it is associated to "life conditions" and it is oriented towards the identification of the conditions that the surrounding environment, physical or material, provides to the individual and to the family, as well as to the possibility to provide satisfaction to individual or familial needs. Thus, these good life conditions refer to having a livable house with concrete walls, not with earthy ones, good information and communication means, and effective public services, among others. Subsequently, the term is associated to "Social Welfare", a term that refers to observable situations of reality which are recognized by the people as positive ones; that is, it refers to the identification of the possibilities offered by the material, physical of social environment of communities in order to satisfy their members' urgent needs. It is associated to counting on the spaces to access to good quality housing, education, health services, recreation and sports, as well as to transportation means, communication and information, as well as to public security, among others. Similarly, the term is associated with ecological aspects that ease the evaluation of the adjustments among the natural resources that societies require for their livelihood and the environmental demands to achieve their appropriate balance.

To the social aspects related to the observation of the positive conditions of reality, it has also been added lately the need to take into account the psychological aspects that allows one to measure the subjective reactions derived from the absence or presence of such aspects and their consequences concerning the satisfaction or happiness in the society.

Nowadays, the definition of quality of life relates to the need to identify the aspirations for social change of groups or communities in search of a better situation. To reach this goal, people are required to be acknowledged as highly-qualified subjects in order to express their experiences with reference to their problems, to clearly identify the challenges they must face in order to overcome them. Yet, to freely express their consideration concerning the way decision-makers and action-executors must proceed to contribute to the consolidation of their life projects and to express their active participation to reach what they consider a good life to be lived by them. Quality of life refers then, commonly, to a subjective indicator measured by satisfaction and happiness judgments where social welfare is one of their components.

The relationship between leisure activities and quality of life should then consider the role of leisure in the configuration of individuals, as "free time" and "leisure" are assumed as spatial-temporary niches which contribute to the formation of their social representations and imaginaries with respect to people being collective and social beings. In this sense, free time and leisure commonly make reference to the way the societies employ the moments when their members voluntarily free themselves from any commitment, obligation and essential tasks, to locate themselves in times and spaces where leisure, relax, contemplation or reflection activities about themselves and the material environment where they are situated, are developed. It is in this contemplative and reflective exercise where the individuals' vital satisfactions, as members of a culture and of a society, emerge; a situation that contributes to the judgment or balance about the accomplishment of goals and objectives in their life projects and; obviously, not only the acknowledgement of their satisfactions, but also the meeting of the needs required to live a good life.

## 11.3 The Rural Aspect: Research Context and Stage

### 11.3.1 The Critical Condition of the Rural Dimension in Colombia

The Colombian rural communities, especially the young ones, have traditionally lived in conditions of invisibility, poverty, violence and precariousness superior to those experienced in the urban space. According to data from the National Agricultural and Livestock Census of 2013, the rural sector shows the continuation of this critical situation possibly motivated by the extraordinary deficit with reference to rural education. In fact, the Multidimensional Poverty Index[1] (MPI) locates on a 44.7% of the population, 73% of children less than 5 years of age not attending any educational institution and, least of all, 72.6% of those youngsters between 17 and 24 years of age. The situation becomes more critical when evidencing that 11.5% of the population older than 15 do not know how to read and write (DANE 2015).

The little Colombian State presence in the rural area contrasts with the presence of illegal groups: guerrillas, paramilitaries, criminal gangs, producers and traffickers of illegal drugs, as well as common offenders, among others. They become a permanent threat to the rural population and especially to boys, girls and youngsters, as they become a kind of trophy for their forced involvement in their criminal activities. To the

land, they become another trophy which is the forced displacement of great amounts of rural families who suffer the worst consequences from these criminal gangs that populate many rural communities.

From the State's perspective, the mandatory military service from 18 years of age affects mainly rural youngsters who comply with this demand as peasant soldiers. Their service is for 12–18 months, a time in which they should be dealing with combats with illegal groups thus being at higher risk of being victimized, where as the High-School Graduate Soldiers and Police Auxiliary High-School Graduate Soldiers are assigned responsibilities in different non-combative operations. In this sense, the peasant soldiers share the same risk as professional soldiers who endure a service term of 18–24 months.

On the other hand, when checking the databases of 10,732 demobilized adults belonging to the Colombian National Liberation Army (ELN), to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and to the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC); and when comparing the age certified by the National Civil Registry Office during the presentation ceremony of their members and the militancy time within the different armed groups, it is possible to infer that 52.3% of adult combatants affiliated to ELN, 50.14% affiliated to FARC, and 38.12% affiliated to AUC, joined these groups when they were still boys or girls (Springer 2014, pp. 30, 31). Similarly, it is possible to infer that not less than 18,000 boys, girls and adolescents are involved in illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, from which more than 12,000 come from the rural sector because their origin, in general, is rural and 69% of their parents are peasants (Springer 2014, p. 21). Research studies carried out at Sergio Arboleda University have demonstrated the recruitment of boys and girls by FARC and have concluded that 47% of their present members, near 8000 guerrilleros (guerilla members), were recruited when they were boys or girls with an approximate age of 15 years (Fajardo 2014). Besides, from the 6,231,617 victims from the armed conflict registered between 1985 and 2013, 49.6% correspond to people who were

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[1] The Multidimensional Poverty Index (PMI) in Colombia is defined by the National Planning Department based upon the indicator developed by *Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative* (OPHI) which reflects the people's degree of deprivation from the perspective of several dimensions. In Colombia, 5 dimensions (home educational conditions, childhood and youth's conditions, health, work and home public services and lodging conditions) and 15 variables were taken into account. Estimates of absolute values were based upon the DANE population projections. These projections were carried out on the basis of the adjusted results of the 2005 population Census and the 1985–2005 census conciliation. The figures restore the country's population, unlike the Household Polls which do not include the population of the old national territories (DNP 2011, p. 1,4).

between 0 and 26 years of age at the moment of their victimization (Procuraduría General de la Nación 2014).

The National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH), an institution of the Colombian state, confirms equally the high degree of victimization of boys, girls and youngsters in the Colombian armed conflict. This institution presents a documented record of 177,307 fatal civil victims between 1958 and March 31, 2013, and 40,787 combatants dying in bellicose actions between 1958 and 2012. This approximately amounts 220,000 deaths resulting from the armed conflict in Colombia (National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH) 2014, p. 32).

Nevertheless, the CNMH sees a reality that overcomes its records when contrasting its data with the databases of lethal political violence constructed by the Institute for Political Studies and International Relations (IEPRI), which registers the free versions of paramilitaries' confessions before the Justice and Peace Unit of the State Prosecutor's Office. Until December 1, 2012, the amount of 25,757 homicides had been established, a figure higher than the one recorded by the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH 2014, p. 32). These new figures are consistent with serious studies carried out by various human rights Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and by different research centers and institutes where it is estimated that three out of four homicides remain out of statistics (National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH) 2014, p. 33).

This data is evidence of the dramatic situation undergone by Colombian rural inhabitants, where both male and female youngsters are affected by particular poverty, inequality and exclusion situations, besides being affected also by high-risk victimization situations due to the armed conflict that this population has suffered for more than 60 years.

### 11.3.2 Evidence-Based Research: Context and Scenario

The research studies, whose findings support this reflection are developed in the Colombian High Andean Mountains, understood it as those moun-

tains on the "Andean Range", one of the nine Continental Spaces[2] of the geographical mosaic in South America. The Andean Range is formed by a mountain chain of 7500 km, which extends from the beginning of the Antarctic Continent to the Caribbean area, with an average width of 320 km. Its most prominent height in the American Continent is the Aconcagua Mount, which reaches 6950 m above sea level and hosts ancient ethnic archetypes which generate a wide cultural variety (Mendoza 2000, p. 44). The Andean Range comprises three different physiogeographical zones: a wet one which extends from the Merida Cordillera in Venezuela to the Peruvian northern region; a semi-arid zone which comprises the Central Andes in Peru and Bolivia, and the highland-plateau zone in the Peruvian southern part, the northwestern and southern parts of Bolivia, the northern part of Chile and part of the northwestern region of Argentina. Agriculture is the main component of production with reference to employment, income and food supplies, with the predominance of potato cultures, and also cereals, grains, vegetables and flowers, as well as dairy cattle, sheep, minor species, produces which vary from one country to another (Llambí 2002).

The first data about territorial planning in Colombia is naturally provided by the continental space mosaic composed by six of the nine South American[3] continental zones, among them is the Colombian Andean Range, which corresponds to the northern part and the extreme of the Andes Range. This extends from the Pacific Platform in the west to the Orinoquia in the east,

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[2]The Continental Areas are great regions shared by several countries, which show arcifinious or natural borders. They are characterized by their stability and varied nature, not only with reference to their physical, topographic, ecological and landscape configurations, but also to the idiosyncrasy of each human group inhabiting them. The Continental Areas in South America are: the Amazon, the Orinoquia, the Marabina Basin, the Andean Range, the Caribbean Area, the Pacific Area, El Chaco and La Pampa and the Patagonian Cone (Mendoza 2000: 40).

[3]The Continental Colombian Zones are: the Amazon, the Orinoquia, the Marabina Basin, the Andean Range, the Caribbean Area and the Pacific Area (Mendoza 2000, p. 42).

and occupies 323,000 square kilometers which are equivalent to the 28.3% of the continental territory (Mendoza 2000, p. 44). The High Andean Mountains, with traditional peasant production, constitute the fundamental landscape where the main Colombian ethnic variety is found.

The research context is defined by the peasant communities at the Cundiboyacense Highland Plateau consisting of 2 of the 32 states which make up the Colombian territory: the state of Cundinamarca with an area of 24,210 square kilometers, which stand for 2.12% of the national territory, with 15 provinces and 116 municipalities (Republic of Colombia 2011b) and the state of Boyacá with 23,189 square kilometers, which stand for 2.03% of the Colombian territory, with 12 provinces and 123 municipalities (Republic of Colombia 2011a). The Cundiboyacense Highland Plateau, a territory that integrates the states described above, is located on the Eastern Andean Mountain Range, on the high zones of the Andean system and mountainous and paramo (Andean moor) ecosystems. These sites reach 3600 m above sea level and are inhabited by a population descending from the Cundiboyacense Chibcha culture, one of the most important ethnic groups in the country.

The potato-producing sub-region of the Cundiboyacense Highland Plateau is the research socio-cultural scenario where the fieldwork has been carried out. It is characterized by a peasant culture resulting from the influence and projection of the culture and mindset of the Chibcha ethnic group,[4] where man is narrowly linked to the surrounding environment from where the vital forces are taken. In this culture, the sun, the moon, the lakes, the mountains and the rocks, as well as the physical phenomena "were linked to the spirits, a reason by which they were considered their main deities" (Ocampo 1983, p. 29)

that, at the same time, promote the conservation of nature. Paradoxically, in the present agricultural holdings there is the predominance of the precepts inherited from the Green Revolution which promotes the use of agrochemicals, machinery and capital to secure high returns, independent from environmental consideration and opposite to ancestral technology.

The potato-producing sub-region is the territory where the water that supplies the aqueducts of Bogota and other cities all over the country is born; and where a wide and varied farming, coal mining and handmade production take place. This sub-region is considered, with reference to the potato production which, at the same time, is an important national and international traditional food, the most important agricultural region of the country. It is characterized by a difficult access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) due to the difficult topographical and economic conditions. This is the reason why its main population centers are located where the national government defines as areas of difficult access, because "the access to the telecommunications services is still deficient in very remote rural places" (National Department of Planning 2009, p. 5).

The socio-cultural phenomena, object of understanding, are constituted by peasant youngsters, their families and their physical spaces – units of farming and mining production, governmental and community educational and institutional centers– and their reciprocal actions and interactions, with the other social actors and with the rural zones where they are located.

### 11.3.3 Evidence-Based Research: Methodology

Methodologically, the study is based upon a sound theory that makes it possible to widen the existing theory or to generate a new one, derived from the data systematically compiled and analyzed by means of a research process. It is a method where the data gathering, its analysis and the emerging categories have a straight relation among themselves and, where the analysis meets

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[4]The Chibcha culture refers to the populations existing in the Nueva Granada in the sixteenth century, when the Spaniards arrived. The most important populations were the Chibcha-Caribbean and the Chibcha, this last occupied Cundinamarca, Boyacá, Western Atrato, Cauca and Central-Eastern Nariño; their main language was the one identified by Spaniards as Muisca or Mosca with as many dialects as families (Ariza 1992:75).

the requirement to be the interaction among researchers and the data, thus being, at the same time, science and art.

From Fundamented Theory, theories are classified as substantive and formal. A theory derived from a substantive area or theory is used to explain and to handle the problems of a social group, in a specific place, such as the one concerning rural youths in the Colombian Andean high mountains, whose results are secured in this reflection. It relates to the permanent interaction achieved by the researcher in the process of data gathering, from which new hypotheses to be verified emerge. In this sense, "it is the result of the systematic processing by means of coding and categorization of the field data" (Murcia and Jaramillo 2000: 73). Formal theories are less specific with reference to a group and a place, being this the reason why they are applied to a wider range of problems and disciplinary topics (Strauss and Corbin 2002); they are identified through the style of gathering and analysis of theoretical data, by which hypotheses are constructed and the substantive theory is constantly compared.

This research study is a qualitative one which, due to its interpretativist character accepts its reflexivity principle, the rationale of ethnographic research and, at the same time, makes emphasis on the social actors' "lived experiences"; in this case, the rural youths of the Colombian Andean high mountains in their daily lives, as the researcher's experience and knowledge, in the world of social sciences. We turn then to Hammersley and Atkinson (1994), mainly to the first, who has been recognized and quoted as the "representative of interpretativists who pursue a synthesis between social realism and constructivism" (Valles 1999: 60).

An emphasis is made on the experience lived by the rural youths, an experience that the researcher shares in the field work and that leads him to a permanent reflection about the incidence of his participation and his own experience and that of the "rural youths", subjects of this study. From this perspective, the role of ethnography is not to describe, but to "reflect on the perception

that the researcher progressively constructs on that reality" (Murcia and Jaramillo 2000: 71).

The methodological "complementarity" in this research retakes all and every one of the elements of reflexive ethnography and similar perspectives and makes it possible to use a plurality of approaches and techniques, methodologies and theories aiming at the comprehension of behaviors and conducts that respond to the complexity of the problems under discussion, and not, on the contrary, that the problem be presented as a response to a certain approach and exclusive theory, a procedure that at present encounters a generalized refusal. In this sense, the inquiry is guided by an "emergent design" which is structured from the successive findings obtained during the full development of the research and is characterized by its "construction and reconstruction in the search for information (Briones 2002: 12).

The methodological premises already presented allow one to elaborate, initially, a survey that will be administered to a representative sample of 544 rural youths, men and women, workers and students, with ages ranging from 16 to 29 years, from the potato-growing sub-region in the Cundiboyacense High Plateau, with the aim to complete its general characterization. Subsequently, detailed interviews will be administered to a significant sample of rural youths, from which the accounts can permit to reflect on their perceptions on the "quality of rural life" are extracted.

Research methods and techniques are defined by the object of research and taking into consideration that in the field of Sociology various objects are demarcated –society with its own dynamics, society as a product from man and the man as a product from society–, the resulting explanation of social reality depends on which of these objects is put ahead (D'Ancona 1999: 44). The object of study in this research has to deal, first, with the man as a product of society, in this case, with the configuration of "rural youth" in the context of the Colombian Andean high mountains. It is also worth to consider the results from the guarantees offered by society to potentiate the

corresponding capacities and to exert one's own rights and, second, with the society as a product of man, which refers to the "rural youth" as a psycho-social actor, trained to influence the development processes of the rural community, to exert the rights to become a guide or an example of life in the search of what is perceived as the "quality of rural life".

Triangulation of information sources is used in this research study as it compares the information obtained by different actors according to their age ranges and gender, occupation and working activity they are devoted to. Equally, the triangulation among techniques is also used as it verifies the validity of statistical data from the initial administration of a survey, with the ethnographic data from the participating observation in the socio-cultural context, along with the data from the administration of in-depth interviews applied to rural youths in their own milieu. Obviously, triangulation is used in the interpretative presentation of data, as the categories are presented from the support of various theories, from the socio-cultural narrations by rural youths and from the researcher's subjective interpretation. Besides, triangulation is implemented from the reviewing of formal theories, which consists of reflecting about the categories of "the rural", "youth" and "quality of life", from different theoretical approaches.

## 11.4 Leisure, Quality of Life, Welfare and Well-Being from Formal Theory

### 11.4.1 Leisure in Classical Greece

The approach to leisure as a concept requires the consideration of its definition in classical Greece where it appears for the first time. Its basic proposal is that man is a rational animal and; therefore, the meaning of human life lies in the exercise of this rationality. For Greeks, the secret of life is the knowledge of humans about themselves, as well as the harmonic expression of everyone's capacities. These Greeks identify

some people lacking rationality, as slaves when compared to their masters, and some are identified as endowed with less rationality than other people and which are then less human, as women are considered with reference to men, or youngsters with reference to adults. This justifies the reservation of citizenship only for male adults "and not for everybody in some cities" (Minogue 2003, p. 24).

The differentiation between free citizens and slaves becomes the starting point to define leisure. With reference to the first, aristocrats and citizens, the *Scholé* is reserved, also known as leisure; to the second ones, slaves and servitude, their negation or *a-scholé*; a concept that has been defended by the great philosophers of the classical period. Slaves do not have any possibility as *Scholé* refers to the free citizens' own activity, to the non-utilitarian action where the human being could deploy, enrich and develop the mind in a more specific way. Thus, "leisure was the way to reach the supreme goal of the human being and to attain human happiness" (Segura and Cuenca 2007, p. 11). The classical Greeks did not define leisure as rest, free time, waste of time or not doing anything, as it is currently assumed nowadays, but as an essential part of life, understood as "activity", as virtue, as the foundation or basis for happiness.

For them, the function of leisure was not resting, or something corresponding to the play to be practiced in the midst of work, as working requires resting and games, as Greeks stated, are for relaxing. Leisure is an activity that looks for nothing out of itself, it is an activity which has its own goal itself, the personal self. In classical Greece, leisure has, as today, various meanings: it is used to speak about calm time without the urgency of obligations, as a peace time specific activity when philosophers, such as Plato, structure their speeches or as a joyful occupation to talk to a friend or to be immersed in philosophy to forget body problems (Segura and Cuenca 2007).

In sum, for the classical Greeks, the leisure life or *scholé* consists of the theoretical contemplation *(theoria)* of life and philosophical specu-

lation. According to Rul.lán, *theoria* is assumed, in this time, as the exercise of the speculative faculty, the contemplation or the search for truth by itself. Accordingly, to contemplate is to look at the world and at its surroundings, to enjoy its beauty without trying to impose anything on it; it supposes the capacity to wonder and, according to Aristotle, "because of having the capacity to wonder, man started philosophizing"[5] and Rul.lán adds, because of it, man started to be idle, to be virtuous, to be happy.

Aristotle refers to leisure: (1) as the activity that is the vehicle to achieve the supreme goal of the human being; the personal fulfillment and the achievement of happiness; (2) as the activity which consolidates itself through the intellectual practice, in the search for beauty, truth and good; (3) as an activity that links itself to the concepts of pleasure and moral beauty, and as a practice typical to the structured, cultured and sensible person, whom would never be qualified as egocentrical; and (4) as an ideal that goes beyond the personal aspect and is oriented towards the formation of the citizen as somebody necessary to exert citizenship and to serve the community (Segura and Cuenca 2007). This conception of leisure, with reference to free citizens, and defended by the great philosophers of classical times, co-exists with popular conceptions which are constructed from the rural and urban spaces, with some similarities from the rural side, and some differences from the urban one.

In the rural zones of classical Greece, work is more valued than leisure, which is understood as a prize and a deserved relaxation, because for rural Greeks, dishonor is inactivity, but not the work. Nevertheless, the rural leisure does not contradict the defense of leisure by philosophers, but if prolonged it is seen as "idleness", which they assume as sloppiness. From this perception, leisure manifests itself through sport activities compatible with the rural working activity, through activities not free from pleasure and refinement which are in close relationship with the seasons of the year, such as to secure a rock shadow in spring in order to drink some good

wine and to eat some goat's meat and bread. There are also activities which provide happiness in a rustic home such as sharing a drink with friends or having a simple food consisting of peas and beech nuts around a bonfire of tree trunks, or enjoying activities external to the household such as "making love, sleeping, following the panegyrics, playing kottabos, living like a bon viveur and shouting tra la la la" or enjoying dionisias, flutes, tragedies, chorus singers, overeating and Euripides' plays" (Segura and Cuenca 2007, pp. 19 and 20).

The urban conception of leisure, for its part, was recognized both by rural inhabitants and philosophers (Segura and Cuenca 2007, p. 21). For rural inhabitants, urban leisure was "party-goers' uproar" and "city smoke", with various representations of their experiences which opposed to the simple and full joys of rural life. On the other hand, Plato disapproves the tyranny of uncultured masses which impose their literary and musical preferences by means of "whistlings, differing cries and mayhems",[6] while Aristotle identifies two kinds of spectators: one who is free and polite, and the other, a vulgar one. The latter group comprises manual workers and day laborers who deserve to be offered contests and shows for their relaxation as "everyone enjoys what is familiar to their nature, that is why contestants should be offered the possibility to use a certain kind of music, for a certain kind of spectator".[7]

### 11.4.2 Leisure in the Roman Empire

The influence of the Hebraic Culture in the Roman civilization is identified in its organization and social hierarchization, where two social classes emerge: one formed by the *civis* or Roman citizen, a subject with all rights, who at the same time can be noble (*nobilis*) or plebeian (*profanum vulgus*); and the servant (*servus*), who has no citizenship but the possibility to buy it to acquire the condition of an emancipated person (Korstanje

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[5]Aristóteles (1990). Metafísica, p. 40.

[6]Platón (1999). Obra completa. Volumen VIII: Leyes (Libros I-VI).

[7]Aristóteles (1991). Política, p. 1337a.

2009). The plebeian citizen can perform occupational activities (*Occupatio*), which is the common and current activity devoted to commerce, administrative management or care of properties, while the noble citizen (*civis nobilis*) can perform leisure activities (*otium*), such as the Greek *scholé*, but without its deep philosophical implications (Jiménez 1986).

The first philosophers that deal with leisure in ancient Rome are Seneca, who tries to translate the Greek ideal of leisure (*otium*) without succeeding, and Cicero, who imposes the idea of alternating leisure with the negation of leisure (*otium* with *nec-otium*) or business.

Seneca identifies two reasons to be devoted to contemplative leisure:

> To be aware that nature wanted to be contemplated, not only to be looked at: it placed us in its central part and provided us with a panoramic view of everything; and it not only stood the man upright, but had the intention to make him apt for contemplation, so that he could follow the stars which slipped from sunrise to twilight, and take his face around everything, and nature had man's head placed on the highest part of his body and put it on a flexible neck […]. "That is why I live according to nature if I give everything to it, and I am its admirer and devotee" (Seneca 1991, p. 265).

Evidently, as in classical Greece, the fundamental of this conception that joins freedom-leisure-opportunity-happiness is the slavery system, as the social organization and hierarchization in ancient Rome identifies these two notions with the cultivation of the spirit by the nobles and relegates the useful work to slaves and other disadvantaged social groups.

This rapprochement to Greek thought resulting from the admiration of Romans and of their culture by Seneca, with the course of time, gives way to the negation and alternation of leisure. Thus, the negation of leisure defines, in practice, a time devoted to business, goods administration or commerce, among others, which is a concept that lies far away from of the contemplative or reflexive activity and from the cognitive development according to Greeks. With reference to the alternation of leisure, it is Cicero who formulates an alternative cycle between "otium" and "negotium", as leisure relaxes both the body and the

spirit to resume work. According to Korstanje (2009), in ancient Rome, leisure is conceived as a practical lapse for rest, for pleasure and for ostentation; thus becoming an alternative to occupation, a time available for recreation which is used according to the citizen's economic possibilities, capacities and expectations.

Evidently, the difference between Greeks and Romans makes that the initial conception of leisure by Romans, inherited from their predecessors, change gradually as the city of Rome becomes an empire. It could not be otherwise given the features that differentiate them: "while Greeks were different because they were theoretical, brilliant and innovating, Romans were sober and cautious peasants-soldiers, with a minor tendency that their predecessors to be dominated by an idea" (Minogue 2003, p. 14). In this sense, Seneca's contributions, as expressed by Maximiliano Emanuel Korstanje, confirm the change in the perception of leisure as a mere contemplative activity.

In the Roman world, as Seneca reflects it, there were three spheres in a citizen's life: pleasure, contemplation (thought) and action. In some aspect, for philosophers and following the loyalty to stoical reason, contemplation prevailed over the other two spheres. As progressing in the State hierarchy, leisure and action became power tools for social and political-institutional control (Seneca 2007). This fact led occasionally the prince to antagonize with the Senate, as in the cases of Caligula and Nero Caesar (Korstanje 2009, p. 8).

Both leisure and action, as *otium* representations, take different spaces provided for their practice. Initially, it takes the Forum, the meeting center of the Roman people that becomes the nucleus of their public life, besides the public baths and the Coliseum, spaces devoted to leisure in the core downtown. Subsequently, as Rome expands itself, the noble people build their summer vacation villas outside Rome, such as Tivoli, Tusculum and Praeneste, among others; similarly to patricians or emperors who have their own villas such as Centucellae for the Emperor Trajan and Hadrian's Villa for Hadrian (of the Antonina dynasty), until having a chain of places devoted

to pleasure or places exclusively qualified for *otium*: Baías, Cumae, Ostia, Antium, Misenum and Pompeia (Jiménez 1986). The noblemen and patricians' villas or country houses perform the function of contributing to the owners and next of kin's ostentation and relaxation.

There are also rustic country vacation houses in rural spaces devoted to farming endeavors such as the economic activity exerted by a citizen with the active participation of a trusted slave, who, through the master's appointment, manages not only all business when he is absent but also the urban villas, constructed for recreation, leisure and relaxation. They also offer baths and delicacies as well as fields for practicing sports, hunting and fishing (Korstanje 2009). The urban villas are trendy ocean- or countryside-view places, which do not have, as in the case of villae rusticate, either a practical goal or a necessary function because they only serve owners to show off their good taste and richness. Their paved paths and their fine mosaics show a certain social standing or stratum, as the service staff or the roman citizens from popular sectors do not enjoy these privileges.

With reference to the *otium* representations in everyday life, the "banquet" is one of the Roman nobles' most coveted pleasures in that time and the taverns are the most desired places by poor people. The banquet is a night dinner taken as a prize to the morning effort, where food and beverages are tasted by the noblemen leaning on a bed, as sitting down at a table was considered a low social level. In contrast, the poor people in the big cities attend taverns located in the low-lying districts or in the surroundings of great stadiums or amphitheaters, where gladiator fights take place, in order to have access to the animals which died in the arena that are used to prepare low price food for their diners (Korstanje 2009).

Definitely the amphitheater as well as the circus and the thermae or thermal baths become the Romans' more used spaces for the everyday life leisure, with characteristics clearly identified by Korstanje (2009). The Amphitheater is the place that Romans from all the different parts of the city massively attend to see gladiators' fights, a show of great acceptance by the people. The Roman circus, its fights and races, triggers so much passion in the people that it becomes obliged conversation everywhere; nevertheless, it is at the so-called Circus Maximus where the great majority of gladiators' shows concentrate, thus becoming the meeting point for all social classes. The thermae are the public spaces where the rich and poor people of the time meet to enjoy the thermal baths, practice sports and socialize after an exhausting working day. The slaves, foreigners and gladiators can also have access to the baths by paying a minimal amount of money given their not very demanding social stratification.

### 11.4.3 Modern and Contemporary Conception of Leisure

The conceptualization of leisure in modern times receives the whole semantic legacy from classical Greece and ancient Rome till the end of the nineteenth century when it is retaken by modern thinkers with the aim to structure a possible "leisure sociology". Studies carried out by known researchers recognized as precursors of the analysis and reflection on leisure, as well as works from contemporary authors, permit us to identify the confusion resulting from the existing polysemy and dichotomy, non exempt from major complications deriving from translations of leisure from different languages into Spanish.

According to researcher Elsie Mc Phail Fanger (2001) the translation of leisure and free time contribute to the confusion in different countries. Free time is called "leisure" by the English people, in the United States it is called "non-working time" or "free time" or "leisure"; in Canada, "leisure" or "recreation"; in Germany, "Musse" or "Freizeit"; in France, "loisir"; in Italy, "tempo libero"; and in Spain or Mexico "tiempo libre" or "ocio". The texts written in different languages, when translated into Spanish, usually use "tiempo libre" as a synonym for "ocio" and "recreación"; although in many cases they are used as synonyms for similar terms, such as: asueto, diversion, descanso, solaz and esparcimiento, reposo and deporte, "whose Provençal root defines

'ocio' as pastime and entertainment" (McPhail 2001, p. 153). The translation of French and English texts into Spanish, in Spanish, as "loisir" and "leisure"; while the English and Italian texts translate it into Mexican Spanish as "tiempo libre" (free time).

With reference to the concept of leisure contained in the works known as precursors of its analysis and reflection, authors such as Roberto Roque Pujol (1999) consider the work entitled *The Theory of Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* by the North American sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1899) as the first direct antecedent of leisure sociology. Veblen examines leisure according to the way or lifestyle of a social class. He considers that the possession of free time, assumed as unproductive employment, as well as the use given, represents a social status, richness and power, and then constitutes a goal to be reached by the masses.

Other authors such as M. F. Lanfant (1978) and Leslie Bella (1989), quoted by Elsie McPhail Fanger (2000) are considered, besides Veblen in the United States, Claude Henri de Rouvroy, Count of Saint Simon, and Paul Lafargue in France, as the precursors of the reflection on leisure. In fact, in the context of the European industrial society, controlled by the economic growth and the new investments in production means, Saint Simon considers leisure as "socially useless", the leisure social class as "an obstacle to the accumulation processes", and everything else that does not have the industrial character, as a parasite, as it "impedes the organization of the industrial society". Besides, he proposes an egalitarian society where the work is assured as a workers' right, and whose implementation is carried out through a more democratic organization (De Grazia 1966, p. 35, 354).

A different approach is Paul Lafargue's,[8] for whom the exercise of the worker's right to work leads to an overproduction which, at the same time, takes bourgeoisie to forced free time. The main goal is not to provide pleasure, but to assure productivity and bourgeoisie's "overconsumption". Accordingly, he says:

> The great English experience, similar to that of some intelligent capitalists, is there, indisputably demonstrating that in order to increase the power of human productivity, it is necessary to reduce the working hours and increase the pay and holidays; and the French people are not yet convinced of this situation (Lafargue 1883, p. 23).

If the above mentioned authors are the precursors of the reflection on leisure by their works at the end of the nineteenth century, it is from 1925 that the start of a social thought, where the reflection on leisure and free time takes part in the trade union demands and becomes an important topic, is marked. It happens in the interval of the two wars and takes part in the trade union demands and in the gains made by the labor movements. The first research studies from the time regard leisure or free time as just one element of culture which favors to study the society through surveys of the public opinion and systematic observation. These ideas are advanced in the United States from the works by the couple Lynd and Lynd (1925), who analyze the urban way of living with the inclusion of behavior patterns when using free time.

Later in 1927, the second phase of the studies carried out by Elton Mayo (1933) at *Western Electric Company* aimed at determining the effect of certain changes in the working conditions of some workers, such as the rest period and the reduction in the number of working hours, among others. He concludes that the factors determining the workers' labor performance are the social and moral motivations more than economic motivation, and that their behavior is conditioned by social norms or standards defined by the social group.

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[8]The editor of Paul Lafargue's original text The Right to Laziness makes it clear that Marguerite Guérin (1816–1887) was Jacques Aristide Boucicaut's wife, the owner of the "Bon Marché" business and famous by his preoccupation for his employees' welfare. At his death, Mrs. Boucicaut kept managing the business and continued her husband's philanthropic works. She states that, as in other occasions, Lafargue directs his attacks against the bourgeoisie, known by their paternalism, in order to be clearer on the class difference that separates them from the proletariat.

Finally, in 1934 the monographic survey *Leisure: A Suburban Study*, by George A. Lundberg, Mirra Komarovsky and Mary Alice McInerny is published. This work marked the beginning of the present leisure sociology. The study examines the leisure patterns of suburban adults who live in the metropolitan area of Winnipeg: their definitions of leisure, the number and type of activities they perform and the meanings they assign to them, as well as the relationship of these ludic complexes with their social and occupational attributes. It concludes that the suburban adults leisure patterns, in this specific context and; obviously, only in similar contexts, are mainly influenced by the family period, which eliminates the influence of other variables considered in the study (Lundberg et al. 1934).

These works, considered within the so-called concrete or applied research studies on isolated aspects of social life within the so-called North American empirical sociology, prioritize the gathering of quantitative data about the free time available for leisure, the preferences on the type of activity to be performed, the frequency of attendance to recreational places and the individuals' opinions thereof. All of this is achieved from the comparative point of view aiming at finding the differences between a social group and the others, or between an era and the others (Roque 1999). The purpose is to infer the importance of free time with reference to other aspects of social life; it does not aim at theorizing or conceptualizing on leisure or free time.

The theorization starts in the second half of the twentieth century when the most important texts dealing with the results from sociological studies on leisure and free time are published. According to the selection made by Roberto Roque Pujol (1999), the most important works[9]

are the following: The Lonely Crowd by David Riesman, Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer, published in 1950; the anthologies, Mass Culture by Bernard Rosenberg in 1957, and Mass Leisure by Rolf Meyersohn and Eric Larrabee in 1958; Work and Leisure by Nels Andersonen in 1961; Of Time, Work and Leisure by Sebastian De Grazia in 1962; Sociologie du Loisir by Joffre Dumazedier in 1974; Vers Une Civilisation du Loisir, by the same Joffre Dumazedier in 1962, Leisure in America: A Social Inquiry by Max Kaplanen, 1960 and Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society by Richard Krausp, published in 1971, among others.

These research studies consider leisure as the experience of a subjective state of freedom, which does not depend upon the others but it is individual, it has a private character being that the reason why the society cannot determine its personal use. Its purpose distances itself from the works carried out in the first half of the century in the United States and Europe, as it is more oriented towards the definition of leisure or free time with a more global approach. Its definitions, which are known as "traditional" ones, turn around the characterization of leisure, its relation with work and "with the individual's motivations, interests and expectations, with social and individual values and with its manifestation through recreational activities" (Roque 1999, p. 10).

The Welfare Society which imposes from the 1960s in the twentieth century assumes leisure as a determining factor to measure the quality of life which, at that time, is considered as social welfare. This is a concept characterized by its political, economic and socio-cultural connotations when considering how the material or physical environment eases the satisfaction of the people's needs. It supposes the presence of a welfare State,

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– Riesman, Denney & Glazer (1950). The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press;
– Rosenberg, B. (1957). Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America. Bernard and David Manning White (ed.) United States: The Free Press, unknown edition (1957), ASIN: B000NRF7C6;
– Meyersohn, E. & Larrabee, R. (1958). Mass Leisure. United States: The Free Press; 1st edition, ASIN: B0006D7DFQ;

– Anderson, N, (1961). Work and Leisure. Michigan: Original from the University of Michigan. Publisher: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961;
– De Grazia, S. (1962). Of Time, Work and Leisure. New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, LCCN 62–13,331; Kaplan, M. (1960) Leisure in America: A Social Inquiry. New York: John Wiley & Sons and
– Kraus, R. G. (1971) Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society. New York: Prentice Hall, 1971, ISBN 039052607X.

which is responsible of the function of distributing richness among all members of the society and of planning the recreational spaces and activities, a wide culture of masses and a strong recreational movement with active leadership on the publicity about the importance of leisure.

In the North American Sociology, the Functional Approach reigns as it widens and complements the empirical study, and concomitantly, reduces the determining objectives as well as it provides ample coverage of the subjective manifestations, being this the era in which the industrial growth outstands as an essential instrument for the development of society. In the 1980s and 1990s, the social sciences acquire the greatest importance with their contribution to the solution of global social problems. Therefore, the traditional concepts on leisure and the experimental generalizations of the 1960s entwine nowadays with communicative and social approaches through a "mosaic of theoretical positions" (Roque 1999, p. 11) which are prone to controversy and confusion.

### 11.4.4 Definitions of Leisure

The great variety of theoretical and conceptual approaches, from classical Greece to the present time, allows the identification of different types of definitions of leisure without reaching a consensus in the community of experts. Richard Krausp (1971), taking into account the trends in the United States and in Europe, distinguishes four great definition groups: (1) De Grazia's classical vision (De Grazia 1966) which considers leisure as the Greek *Skholé* and Pieper's (1974) which assumes leisure as a state of soul, among others; (2) Veblen's original conception which takes leisure as the function of social classes; (3) Dumazedier's (1974) perspective, among others, which assumes leisure as a form of activity; (4) Lynd and Lynd's vision who, in the context of industrial development, assume leisure as "free time" or the time when the absence of obligations allows to carry out any kind of activities.

It is precisely Richard Straus (1971) who summarizes the definition of leisure as free time, also known as residual time:

> (…) time that is free from work or from those responsibilities related to work, such as trips, studies or social complications based upon the labor activity. It is also intended as a time non devoted to essential self-maintenance activities, such as sleeping, eating or personal care. Its most outstanding characteristic is, however, the weakening of the sense of obligation or compulsion. (…) The most important element for the definition appears to be a substantive degree of non-bindingness and the sense of freedom and individuality in the selection by the participant (…) (Krausp, 1971, pp. 256–260).

This is a definition of leisure that has been highly controversial taking into account that free time provides the opportunities for freedom and happiness, but considering that it is a time reference, the demands from industrial work may limit these possibilities.

Peter A. Witt and Gary Ellis (1985) identify only three groups of definitions which assume leisure as free time, activity and mental state. Free time and activity can be considered as "objectives", in that the individuals' own and independent views allow to contribute to the discernment about leisure, while the mental state can be considered as "subjective" in that it refers to the individuals' perception about whether a certain activity that they perform, is leisure, or a business, or the exercise of an activity that is essential for life such as sleeping or eating.

To adopt any of these two approaches requires taking, by all those responsible for the construction of public policies and political actions, as much information as possible about what has been intended as leisure by the potential users of space and time for their enjoyment. This should be done in order to narrow the differences between the two approaches, objective and subjective ones, given their feedback resulting from the unavoidable interdependence which requires the search for a balance, which has been absent until now.

Roque (1999), when reviewing the above mentioned groups of authors, identifies five great definition groups: leisure as free time, leisure in

Karl Marx's Estrangement Theory; leisure as a mental and soul state, leisure as a recreational activity and leisure as a value. Given the fact that reference to some of these definitions has already been done, then a very brief description of the remaining definitions is presented.

Karl Marx's[10] view about leisure refers to its role to overcome the workers' state of estrangement or alienation. Indeed, Marx states that workers do not sell their work to the employer but their labor force which is merchandise as all others, with the capacity to produce other goods; thus, increasing, reproducing and multiplying their value. In this process, workers exhaust their workforce and require their renovation through the recovery of their creative capacity that has been exhausted in the course of time. Marx[11] explains that the workers' estrangement generates a socio-psychological situation or a particular consciousness state as they do not confirm themselves, but they deny themselves; workers do not feel happy but unhappy; they do not develop their physical and mental energy freely, but they modify their body and ruin their mind; therefore, workers feel out of themselves, they only feel they are free when they are not working, and according to Marx, when workers are at work, they do not feel free (Roque 1999).

It is evident that this kingdom of freedom would be located out of the working time, that is, in free time. It is here, in the course of free time, when workers reproduce their creative capacity, their workforce and their physical and psychic potentials. They recover them by means of a salary, a minimal recognition for their physical and psychic exhaustion, which would let them access a set of subsistence and recreational activities, which truly identify themselves with freedom, self-fulfillment and sociability, thus opposing radically to working time and to the working activities being performed (Roque 1999).

Some defenders of the definition of leisure as a mind and soul state affirm that the term "leisure" refers to the human experience, characterized by intrinsic motivations and satisfactions, by the sense people assign to freedom with reference to selection and to freedom concerning obligation, and by the comprehension that is accepted as leisure by the reference group itself (Hamilton-Smith 1984). This prioritization of leisure as something merely subjective and associated with the perception of freedom puts aside the consideration of its definition, taking into consideration both the objective and the subjective sides, aspects which, in this reflection, must be integrated in their theorization.

Additionally, leisure defined as an activity has the disadvantage that its validity depends on the fact that it is included in a list of activities previously considered as leisure. The problem lies in the elaboration of the list of activities as one activity may be considered as leisure, remunerated work or occupation, non-remunerated obligation or as an essential activity for life, by one person or by different people. Some examples are presented at the beginning of this chapter under the headline of Polysemy and Dichotomy of Leisure and Quality of Life.

### 11.4.5  Concepts on Quality of Life and on Rural Quality of Life

The journey through the various concepts about quality of life permits one to identify the importance with which it acquires from the social and political perspectives, from the middle of the last century, when Western governments started to provide welfare for the members of the societies under their charge.

The concept of Quality of life identifies itself initially with that of the individuals' life conditions when referring to observable situations of the reality in their immediate environment, recognized by them, as highly positive. The post-War industrial context and the rapid economic growth in the United States and Western Europe, in conjunction with the social challenge consisting in getting better life conditions and reliable

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[10]Marx's view about leisure and free time can be consulted and broadened in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844–1845. Havana: https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/1840s/manuscritos/

[11]It can be consulted and broadened in Marx. C. (1971). Wage labor and capital. La Habana. https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/1840s/49-trab2.htm

users' satisfaction measures resulting from the services provided, transformed the concept into a condition of being an objective and a process with concrete developments (Casas 1999). Quality of life is then assumed to be Social Welfare when considering that the material or physical environment surrounding the people and communities makes it possible to satisfy their needs (Bauer 1966; Duncan 1969; Smith 1973; Andrews and Withey 1976; and Michalos 1980). This concept of Quality of life has public and social connotations as well as psychological ones, given the interest to measure welfare through satisfaction or happiness judgments.

Most of the works developed on the quality of life, assumed as social welfare, at the social, political or psychological levels, independently from the methodologies used, characterize themselves by an absence of conceptual definitions concerning the terms used. Accordingly, that is why the terms quality of life, happiness, welfare or satisfaction are used indistinctively in the same sense and "in an interchangeable form", making it difficult to define a theoretical approximation to their study (Amérigo 1993, p. 101).

At present, the results concerning the quality of life allow one to identify the confluence of other connotations in the concept: political, socio-cultural and basically a psycho-social or subjective connotation. This last one derives from the evaluation people do, in a given moment of their lives, of their positive or negative experiences, of their current situations, of their future perspectives and of their global life visions; these are generally recognized as "vital satisfactions" (Tonon 2006, p. 18). Accordingly, the concept of Quality of life transcends the considerations about the immediate material environment as a welfare satisfier, to be considered as associated to other dimensions, and the person traditionally conceived as an "object", to be conceived as a "subject" and a protagonist acting for their own benefit and the community's.

Additionally, with reference to the reflection on the perception that rural youths at the high Colombian Andean mountain have about Quality of life and leisure, and about the incidence of leisure on their quality of life, the recognition of "rural" as a socio-cultural category is required to approach it. In this sense, to reflect on "the rural" dimension implies that one should recognize the conditions deriving from the activities that the rural inhabitants develop in these areas at a given time, which manifest themselves through life expressions under the influence of their historicity. The space/time is not considered static and resistant to change because of its material or physical consideration from the middle of the twentieth century, it has been seen as an entity with relative, modifiable and changing dimensions derived from its union to historical and demographic expansions and contractions related with collective needs (Fals Borda 2000). Thus, space/time is determined, then, by the qualified observer's point of view.

The space/time, in this case, the "rural" aspect, is assumed as a *bio-space*, a "place" or "site" defined as a unity with predisposition to be adjusted or revised as a reflection of living realities, which are configured as a way of "response to local or regional processes of social, economic and political development which, at the same time, link vital production and reproduction activities to the places where they are carried and from where elements of social continuity and cultural diversity are derived (Fals Borda 2000: 9). It is an abstract representation of a specific construction work which provides a point of view about the set of points of view from which the current agents, in their current behavior, "address their sights onto the social world" (Bourdieu 1998, p. 169). Accordingly, the rural bio-space[12] is fundamental due to the role it exerts in the personality development and culture, as it is the place where the people occupying it, in this case the rural youngsters, make permanent use of their memory to infer the present on the basis of their

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[12] In the "rural aspect", bio-spaces are composed by relatively homogeneous zones such as "ecosystems, wastelands, hydrographic basins, historical-cultural regions, ethnic territories and indigenous reservations, areas of peasant reserves, natural parks, provinces, associated municipalities and neighborhood-villages", while in the city they are conformed by "boroughs, localities or zones, miscellaneous circuits, districts, metropolitan and suburban areas" (Fals Borda, 2009, p. 9).

own stories and to presume their future based upon their personal goals.

These considerations permit one to recognize, in this reflection, the high Colombian Andean mountain as a space/time defined by the points of view of the rural youths inhabiting it, who are considered current and valid agents to manifest themselves through expressions concerning the reality of the various processes endowed with a political, economic, social or cultural nature. The high Andean mountains are then assumed as a *bio-space* with a relatively homogeneous historical-cultural linking that makes rural youngsters to become valid observers to express their points of view, and also trained to be key informants of the studies whose results underpin this reflection. The meanings they construct on the "rural aspect" and on their practical behaviors, interaction and socialization forms concerning the rural aspect constitute a web of meanings whose interpretation contributes, as a whole, to the comprehension of the sense they confer to "leisure" and to its relation with the "rural quality of life"; that is, to their perception about the way that leisure contributes to the achievement of what they consider a good life.

The recognition of the "rural aspect", as described above, makes the general concept on quality of life, from its psycho-social connotation, to be assumed in the sense of a "trend towards", more than the reaching of a "concrete objective" before the utopian purpose of reaching happiness, welfare or satisfaction with life or with definite areas of life (Fernández Dols 1990, cited in Casas 1999). These authors' affirmations are shared, consequently, in the sense that "quality" seems to correspond more to respectable expectations and acceptable values from the perspective of moral rationality or psycho-social rationality in the Weberian sense.

The concepts on the quality of life from the middle of the twentieth century on, are seen as an observable reality by the people (Life Conditions) or seen as an observable reality by communities and social groups (Welfare), they have meanings that are very different from the concept of quality of life seen from a macro-social perspective in the present context of globalization. As an observ-

able reality by the people, by the individual or by the group, it is given different meanings related to counting on many quality products and services, such as living in a quality environment, appreciating that there is quality in the various walks of life, or being able to meet the own comfort or welfare expectations (Blanco 1985; Casas 1996, 1998). From the macro-social perspective of environment, quality of life is understood as strongly pervaded by psycho-social components and, in this sense, it is a function of both the material and micro-social environment (social welfare) and the macro-social environment (psychological welfare), which support the integrality of the concept.

Indeed, this integrality sets the norm in approaching research studies on life quality as they start with the consideration of the material environment along with the macro-social one; thus considering the person, traditionally known as an "object," or as a "subject", the protagonist of their actions. This raises a social and political reality based upon the respect for human rights and generates the need to work in an integrated way (Tonon 2008). It equally becomes a privileged look, in so far, when integrating the macro and micro dimensions, it tries that the protagonists' vision be taken into account at the time to make a decision or evaluate public policies, as it becomes innovative information with reference to the traditional measurements of social welfare.

On the basis of the above, "quality of rural life" is assumed, in this reflection, as a category that is constructed by incorporating the following connotations: (a) a political one derived from the choices that the rural youngsters of the high Colombian Andean mountains have to participate, actively and effectively, in the decisions that affect or may affect what they consider a good life to be enjoyed by them and by their families or by the community where they are immersed; (b) an economic connotation derived from the opportunities to use the physical-material resources of their rural environment to carry out actions they consider necessary to achieve what they call a good life; (c) a socio-cultural connotation derived from the opportunities to have access to the

fundamental rights that the State must guarantee and; (d) an essentially psycho-social one derived from the assessment that rural youths make, in a given moment of their lives, about their experiences, real situations, future perspectives and global visions of life in general. These considerations are part of the solid conceptualization elaborated by contemporary authors, in particular Evans et al. (1985), Casas (1989, 1999), Andrews and Withey (1976), Campbell et al. (1976), Amérigo (1993) and Tonon (2008, 2009). The traditional concept transcends social welfare that restricts its application to different communities, obviously including the Colombian rural communities.

### 11.4.6  Concepts of Welfare, Well-Being, Satisfaction and Happiness

Taking into account Amérigo's (1993) considerations about the meanings of *welfare* and *happiness*, the analysis of these two terms is approached. The concept of "welfare" that is presented through the political or sociological discourse acquires a "macro-level" perspective when studying, for example, the state of the society's general welfare, while from the perspective of Psychology, it acquires a "micro-level" dimension when studying individuals or social groups. This is important because either discourse permits to have different meanings, not always explicit, thus leading to confusions and improper interpretations.

The term "bienestar" in Spanish results from the only possible translation of two different Anglo-Saxon terms: *welfare* and *well-being*. The Anglo-Saxon psychological literature refers to the term *well-being*, while the political and social literature refers to *welfare*, it is in this sense that the term *welfare state* is used to refer to the condition of welfare or *general welfare* to refer the general welfare of society. At present, the term *welfare* is traditionally being used to refer to both the social welfare state and general welfare, as the individuals' quality of life, because when *welfare* refers to the society as en entity, when it

is considered as a value, that is, when it is used by politicians; welfare and quality of life are identified", with the aim to extend and objectify the concept of happiness both in the public and social fields (Amérigo 1993, p. 102).

*Well-being* is a term that is mainly used in the psychological Anglo-Saxon literature and it is assumed, in most cases, as a component of the individuals' quality of life. This is why the definition of quality of life presented by Levi and Andersson (1980, p. 6) and quoted by Amérigo (1993, p. 102–103) covers all the aspects expressed to the moment: "With this concept we understand a measure consisting of physical, mental and social welfare, as perceived by every individual and every group, and consisting of happiness, satisfaction and reward." In sum, quality of life would consist of perceived well-being, happiness and satisfaction. *Welfare* and *quality of life* refer then to the same concept, as both refer to happiness and both result from it, which is considered as the ultimate goal of every human being. Then, the goal of *quality of life* or *welfare* is to socialize happiness in such a way that every individual can reach it. The psychological discourse goes from a macro-social to a micro-social perspective, from an individual to a group one, thus becoming the subjective study of individual or group welfare, of *well-being.*

With reference to the terms *satisfaction* and *happiness*, although there are authors which give the same meaning to them, such as Cantril (1965) who tends to use the judgments of satisfaction and happiness in a similar form, there are other authors such as Campbell et al. (1976) who identify differences between regarding oneself happy and regarding oneself satisfied. Other authors identify an overlapping between these concepts without a well-defined identity among them.

The Dictionary of the Castilian Language defines happiness as the "Situation of being for whom the circumstances of his life are as he desires" and "Circumstantial mood of the one who gets something that contributes to that situation", while satisfaction defines it as a "state of mind experienced with what satisfies" (Amérigo 1993, p. 106). Given that the second definition of happiness coincides with that of satisfaction and

that both refer to circumstantial mood states, transient and defined within a concrete time, we could think in considering happiness and satisfaction as something essentially affective. Nevertheless, the first meaning of happiness displays some difference from the definition of satisfaction. This refers to a comparison that individuals make between what they possess and what they want to possess in the course of life, so that if they establish a coincidence between possession and desire, the individuals are in a situation of happiness. As it refers to a comparison and that the meaning of happiness seems to be more stable than that of satisfaction, it leads to thinking about cognitive mechanisms. This differentiation allows a first approach towards the consideration of a more cognitive aspect of happiness and a more affective one of satisfaction.

The controversy results from the consideration of happiness and satisfaction as processes or results from cognitive or affective experiences, as there are various authors who give one or another consideration to these concepts. In this reflection it is shared with those authors who affirm that both cognitive and the affective processes are intimately related as part or elements of a continuum or flow inseparable of conduct. Indeed, when a person advances a judgment of satisfaction, verbally flow, expresses an attitude, a positive feeling, an affection. Therefore, a judgment of satisfaction, as a subjective indicator of quality of life, must be approached from an attitudinal perspective that considers cognitive, affective and behavioral mechanisms, in the course of the process by which an individual state manifests to be satisfied or not with a particular aspect of his life or with his own life in general (Lewis et al. 1984, p. 264; Amérigo 1993, p. 108).

## 11.5 Network of Meanings on Leisure and Rural Quality of Life

To reflect on the various perceptions that rural youths at the high Colombian Andean mountains have about leisure and Quality of life as well as about the incidence of leisure to reach that qual-

ity of life requires to initially approach two types of rural youths. They appear in the research process at the University of Manizales, Colombia, whose findings support this reflection: working rural youths and student rural youths, both defined by the activity they perform every day.

### 11.5.1 Emerging Types of Rural Youth

The findings in the above mentioned research allow the identification of "rural youth" as a social-cultural category with clearly defined characteristics that differentiate it from the universalized and homogeneous concept of "youth," with which the design of public policies in Colombia is approached. Two different emerging types of "rural youth", defined by the form how rural youngsters approach the achievement of their life projects, are identified as such: working rural youths, understood as a "social peremptory" and student rural youths, in the same biological age ranges as the preceding one (14–29 years), understood as a "social rural moratorium".

The "social peremptory" is a category that rises out of the research process with the aim to mean not only an extension to acquire the necessary preparation to ease the productive integration of rural youths in society, but also the decision to be linked early to the exertion of responsibilities and commitments, which in other contexts refer to adulthood. From Latin *peremptorĭus,* meaning conclusive, decisive, determinant, urgent or pressing, it tries to mean the forced celerity in the process of the employment relationship of rural youths, the relentless search to "be somebody in life." This is a distinction that is reached when youths recognize themselves and are recognized by the rural community where they are immersed as good people and as models to be followed.

The "working rural youths" are not employed to meet a dream to accede to possible privileges which, in other times, were enjoyed by adults according to the social moratorium. Their early employment is forced by poverty, precariousness, vulnerability and State absence in the rural con-

text where they are immersed, and by the possibilities which, according to their own judgment, allow them to meet their life project more effectively. They perceive a few options to satisfy their life project in the rural world from the perspective of study, as they consider that it is the rural work that offers them the only and true option to become the same as the "student rural youths," who firmly pursue to become "somebody in life".

Additionally, the social moratorium, although being a current category in the 1960s in the twentieth century, emerges as "rural social moratorium" in the context of rural youths at the high Colombian Andean mountains, with particular features that differentiate it at the present time. The traditional social moratorium tries to explain the adolescents' "lack of ability to position themselves within an occupational identity" (Erikson 1971, p. 180) and defines a forced postponement of the best life experiences reserved to adults. This traditional definition has been consistently adjusting to the present globalized world as a voluntary extension of middle and high class urban youths, representatives of youth prototypes socially defined, with the aims to reach the qualities demanded to compete efficiently in the global labor community. In this sense, the traditional social moratorium requires to prolong voluntarily the preparation of youths until reaching graduate or post-graduate degrees and learning several languages, to guarantee their insertion in the global economic and financial society more than in a local society where they are from.

The "rural youths" in the high mountain sectors and the peasant production at the Colombian Andean zone, with an approximate ratio equivalent to a one third part of the population, present a "rural social moratorium", which in some aspects approaches the traditional concept proudly defined by Erikson (1971), while in other aspects, it goes further. Evidently, student rural youths postpone commitments and responsibilities, such as having a family, children and being hired full time or exclusively. Conversely, for the youths in the last century and even for some in this century, the postponement is not forced by their parents but voluntary, as it obeys the firm intention to meet the expectation of "becoming somebody in life," that is, to consolidate the project of life.

Both, workers and students are "rural youths", although they are in a different situation; that is, the lacking, poor and risky rural environment where they live leads them through different ways in the aim at reaching the same goal. In each case, they look for the route they consider appropriate according to the interaction with themselves and with the others to reach this goal. On the other hand, the youngsters construct meanings about the State, the government or about the public administration, as an institution which does not provide the necessary options to reach their personal goals in order to meet their project of life, understood as "to become somebody in life", that is, to recognize themselves and be recognized as a model to remain in the community where they are.

### 11.5.1.1 Perception of "The Rural" as a Space of Satisfactions and Challenges

Working rural youths perceive "the rural" dimension as a category, which is linked to the satisfaction of physical, material, individual and collective needs; it basically offers satisfactions which go far beyond the material and physical aspects. They recognize that the "urban" dimension offers opportunities and benefits which are scarce in the rural environment, such as a good possibility to study or to work, or a better access to public services; but they perceive the rural dimension as a space that provides them with satisfactions such as equality, freedom, silence, peacefulness, pure air and clean water. This is the way the key interviewees speak:

> Well, ruralness is like […] more beautiful than the city, one feels freer, there is more silence, there is more pure air, all of that (H/Ed:17/JoE).[13]

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[13] **(H/Ed:26/JoTa).** This is the coding to be used from now on, where [H] man; [M] woman [Ed: 26], the interviewee's age, in this case, 26 years; [Jo] Youth; E: student; Ta: agricultural worker, Tc: worker in the retail trade; Tm: mine worker and Th: household worker.

As I said a moment ago, here there is more freedom, more support within the family, everybody shares, everybody supports (M/Ed:22/JoTc).

We cannot discriminate against anybody here, we are all equal, we have the same capacity for everything (M/Ed: 29/JoTm).

To the positive things of the countryside, the working rural youths add all of the characteristics the inhabitants perceive as strengths which lead them to take clearly defined positions with reference to the possibility of migrating to the city in search for new possibilities. In this sense, they express their intention of not leaving the countryside, as it is stated in the following quotations:

I live happily here in my village, very tranquil, I don't have any problems with anybody, if I go out I am everybody's friend, I have my little house here, it's almost completed, I am finishing it on the other side […]. Here the people are very devoted to their work, they are very united, then that's why I say, we don't have to leave our village (…) the village here is without problems, we are all very united here (H/Ed:29/JoTa).

Opposite to workers, the high school student rural youths, less than 18 years of age, think about the need to move to the capital city or intermediate cities, after graduating from high school, to look for a different to the rural job, as something that provides them with the economic resources necessaries to pay the university studies, This is what two interviewees say:

I would like to be in the city, to study electronics, *to go ahead* […] I would prefer the city, I think it is better (H/Ed:17/JoE).

I am planning to leave this place because the economy here is not good […] the dream I have is to become an engineer, and with me working here, it is not possible because the earning is not significant, I would rather move to the capital city (M/Ed:16/JoE).

The student rural youths who are ending their university studies in the capital city and those who are taking their high school studies in the high Andean mountains, of traditional peasant production, perceive the need to come back and contribute to the development of the rural community through the application of the knowledge acquired at the university, as soon as they completed their studies. Taking advantage of the study opportunities offered at the great urban centers is considered by them as a preparation phase – rural social moratorium – necessary to re-integrate, after graduating, to their original rural zone and contribute to the development of the rural society where they are from. They express it as follows:

Rural development would be like having the people have the opportunity to study and to apply their knowledge in the same rural area, to create business or actions that benefit the rural zone so it can develop (M/Ed:21/JoE).

One had to study something and work here in the farm to develop oneself here, to go ahead in this land, and to help the people of the countryside who have the most needs (H/Ed:17/JoE).

## 11.5.2 Rural Youths' Leisure Activities

Contemplating the landscape, riding a bike with some friends, playing a soccer game, drinking some beers with the co-workers, or traveling with the family on weekends, are considered as the main leisure activities by working and student rural youths. They are activities that provide satisfactions, happiness and wellness to a certain extent so that they ask for the spaces to put these activities into practice. In the third report, the perception of the role of the school as an entertainment and leisure place is evident. They express it as follows:

Sometimes we go out to play with the other members of the community, I ask them to play […] or to ride a bike […], we say we are going to drink a beer and we meet all of us together, we tell jokes, laugh and live happily. In the community that I have, we are all friends (H/Ed:29/JoTm).

Talking about the small town up there, a soccer field is missing there, yes, because there is no place to practice a sport, simply people go out to smoke a cigarette on a corner (H/Ed:23/JoTm).

To be at school is the most beautiful time because one sometimes studies, other times meets with the friends only to talk and, it is a beautiful time, and in the afternoon one devotes the time to do homework, then to watch television and to help with the activities at home (M/Ed:16/JoE).

### 11.5.3 The Perception of "Rural Quality of Life"

The working rural youths perceive getting quality of life as gaining equality, admiration and solidarity because of their honest and committed work, because of their respectful behavior and because they are supportive with themselves, with their family and with their community, which results in general understanding. They perceive it as a concept that is very close to happiness and to human rights. This is what is revealed through the following quotations:

> Quality of life is when you are not different from anybody else, do you understand me? But to always have the commitment to be a good person at home, to be careful with the house, with the neighbors, with friends, with everything around you, this is quality of life (H/Ed:29/JoTm).

> Quality of life for me would be to be a good person with everybody, to come to this town and to be greeted by everybody as well as to be recognized everywhere H/Ed:23/JoTm).

> It is to be happy, to be a nice person, to have friends to talk with and to be able to collaborate with the people so that they do not say that one is detestable, not to be considered as …, it is to be responsible with everything required (H/Ed:26/Jo/Ta).

> It is happiness, total understanding, love, if there is no understanding, there is no love, among neighbors or relatives, without love one lives unhappily (M/Ed:22/JoTc).

Rural youths devoted to study, for their part, perceive education as the training and the acquiring of the skills that are required to integrate into society by means of a job that makes it possible to have better economic incomes which, at the same time, provide a better quality of life. Nevertheless, they associate happiness to being nice people or to be on the way to become some-

body" or "to get ahead", as it is deduced from the following:

> At the higher education level, [the rural aspect] is almost forgotten; this then affects partially the quality of people's lives because they do not have the opportunity to have a good job and a good economic income (M/Ed:21/JoE).

> Well, Quality of life is like the comfort the person has, the capacity to eat well, to have good clothes, good lodging, to be healthy (M/Ed:21/JoE).

> Quality of life contributes to being happy, it is like to be a good kid, a good person, because not being a good person is to be unhappy […]; to have better friends, one is happy, one has friends, and the like (H/Ed:17/JoE).

### 11.5.4 The Perception of "Youth" and "Adulthood"

The working rural youngsters understand "youth" as a concept that is very close to a person's autonomous way of feeling and acting. They associate youth with "lack of commitments" or "lack of responsibilities", such as caring or responding for a family, for children or for a job. Besides, youngsters perceive youth as a phase of life where they perform leisure activities in the rural space, thus giving the impression that these activities are restricted in adulthood. They express it as follows:

> To be young is when you have the best opportunity in life, you participate in any activity you may have, you do whatever, what you like […], it is when you are not urged by anybody, to be young is the best thing […] For example: games, entertainments, dancing […] playing a mini-soccer game with all of your mates, to sit down to chat, to talk about current happenings, that's youth (H/Ed:29/JoTm).

Additionally, they consider the beginning of "adulthood" when the person becomes responsible about how to start a home, different from that of the parents or starts working. It is at this moment when people define personal scopes and plans a long-term life project that will allow them to recognize themselves and to be recognized as

human beings who struggle to succeed personally and with relation to others. The project is achieved, according to them, when they become a life example and a guide for other youths or for the coming generations, although there is no concordance with the standards set in their rural community. They express it as follows:

> It is when one is an adult that one becomes responsible, and wants to be somebody, and respects and wants to be respected, that's what it is to be an adult (H/Ed:27/JoTa).

> We have to have responsibilities […] one, let's say, in childhood or in adolescence, one did not think about anything, but if suddenly one had a Colombian peso to be spent, it was spent, but now one has to think about the children (H/Ed:25/JoTa).

> To be an adult is when you have commitments, at least, you have a commitment with the family, and there you have to be able to manage the condition of being an adult. You have to think deeply about what you have, the commitment is not going to be the same; that in youth you managed youself and you went wherever you wanted, now you are going to have a bigger commitment with yourself (H/Ed:29/JoTm).

Given that working rural youths acquire commitments and responsibilities at an early age, they think about an overlapping of youth and adulthood where responsibilities and commitments are not an obstacle to continue with unexpected and autonomous behaviors which characterize, according to their perceptions, youth by leaving this decision to every individual's will and feeling, without becoming irresponsible. Additionally, they reiterate the predisposition to relate youth to the performance of leisure practices. They express it as follows:

> Youths can acquire any commitment they want to, but they keep on being young, that depends on everybody, because if I am already married, I am trapped and I cannot be free, no, instead of that, I have to invite the wife to have a walk and entertain ourselves […]. To be young depends on oneself, because if I am 40 years old, for example, and I want to continue being young, I can go out to ride a bike, to play, I can play a mini-soccer game with other youths (H(Ed:29/JoTm).

Rural youths devoted to study show a better attitude and capacity for independence and famil-ial autonomy with reference to urban youths. Rural youths "know how to earn money", as they show a better attitude towards work given their labor occupation during free time or on school vacation; this lets them access to their own livelihood. The difference between rural and city youths is clearly defined by Aurora, a university youngster whose immediate experience is linked to both spaces:

> Rural people give the impression that they know more about what money is, they know how to get it, to engage in something, while city youths, let's say, if they study and they go on vacation, they do nothing […], they are more independent from their parents. Rural youths, well, they are dependent while they are studying, if they are on vacation they get a job doing whatever, they help their father, they earn their own livelihood; then, they appear to be more focused on working, they have a better desire to work, that is, they have more experience, they are more motivated to get money (M/Ed:21/JoE).

The findings resulting from these research processes that underpin this reflection allow us to verify how the perceptions of youths' at the high Colombian Andean Mountains, with reference to "leisure" and "quality of life", that make up a complex network of meanings. Its interpretation makes it possible to set up, in its conclusions, a new thematic dimension concerning the incidence of leisure on the quality of life.

## 11.6    Final Considerations

### 11.6.1 Quality of Life Perceived by Rural Youths

The perceptions of the quality of life by rural youth refers both to the consideration of merely descriptive, economic and quantitative criteria related to the satisfaction of material needs, as well as to the consideration of subjective and psychological criteria that transcend the satisfaction of the material needs, for to value those aspects that make them happy and satisfied with life. Indeed, when young rural students express their perception of quality of life as the access to "good

economic income" and as "the comforts they have as people, the capacity to feed well, to dress well, to have a lodging, to enjoy good health", they refer to the satisfaction of their vital needs, to which objective social indicators are used. Nevertheless, working rural youths go beyond these social considerations associated to vital needs as perceived by students, with the aim to identify the quality of life with needs associated to the personal happiness sense. It is thus evidenced when they identify quality of life with "happiness" and this with total understanding because "if there is no comprehension, there is no love, be it among neighbors or relatives, there is no happiness". It is also clear when they perceive quality of life as "being happy, being nice people, having friends to be able to collaborate with and talk to people, being responsible with reference to everything needed". These subjective aspects of people's quality of life require subjective social indicators for their measurement.

Quality of life perceived by rural youths, in the socio-cultural context of the study, it is a term that represents an ample dimensions spectrum of human experience which goes from those dimensions associated to vital needs, such as food, health or housing, to those ones associated to the development of a sense of personal fullness and happiness. This ample spectrum of objective and subjective aspects includes as one of the last ones, the perceived well-being or the perceived quality of life, which is defined through the traditional judgments of satisfaction and happiness that individuals experiment in the course of their lives or through different stages of their life. These judgments study, in short, the attitude of the subject versus his life general or to certain specific aspects of his life as the opportunities he has to access health, work, housing or leisure, among others.

The judgments of satisfaction and happiness that the rural young people advance through leisure regarding the life they consider good and dignified to be lived by them, are made explicit through their narratives. In this regard, the discussion on the cognitive and affective compo-

nents of the concept of "attitude" deeply implicated in evaluative judgments about individual well-being is neglected.

## 11.6.2 Well-Being Perceived by Rural Young People Regarding Leisure

The rural youths at the High Andean Mountains do not perceive leisure as an existence vital activity but as an experience of a freedom subjective state, which depends, exclusively, on themselves, which is individual and private, which does not depend on the others; therefore, the society cannot determine its personal use. The students express and highlight the freedom that is lived in the rural in contrast to what is lived in the urban. In this sense, they ratify that "rural life is freer" and when they say "Here there's more freedom", they ratify their consideration of their rural space as a space of freedom, where they feel free and autonomous. It is a freedom and an autonomy that they use to decide freely on the development of their daily activities, among which are the leisure activities. They develop them in their free time, generally on weekends, once they are free from their student or work commitments and from activities they consider vital ones such as eating or sleeping.

Rural youths worker, for their part, manifest to be happy when they freely perform leisure activities such as playing with the other members of the community, riding a bike, have a few beers, meet to tell jokes, which provide them with happiness because "one laugh and lives happy". They are activities which are not part of the working time in the countryside, but they have a time and space freely decided by the subjects. Nevertheless, they recognize the existence of contemplative activities and reflection they carry out in their leisure time. It is the time devoted to contemplate nature, which leads them to express their perceptions of individual well-being fare with respect to their bounties and benefits. When a young rural worker they say that the rural life is

more beautiful than the city because there is more silence and even there is purer air, what they do is to express the results from a contemplative activity which leads them to be surer on the desire of not leaving the rural space, as the space that gives you satisfaction and happiness. It is the same feeling that the students express when they affirm their intention to return to their land, once they have finished their professional studies in the city.

Additionally, the youths workers at the High Colombian Andean Mountains associate leisure with well-being young or adolescent, which they define as a life phase in which they exercise their freedom to develop or perform in any activity that they like or attract their attention, like playing football, going out dancing, having fun, sitting down to talk with their friends, commenting on what happens to them, because "that's the youth". The social peremptory, a category that emerges in the studies whose results serve as a basis for this reflection, which takes them to an early linking to society, through the work and the building of a new home, different from that of their parents, also leads them to ignore the age limits that have been institutionalized from Biology and from Psychology itself to define themselves as young people. For this reason, in exercising their freedom and autonomy, they decide to keep on being young after an early linking to the society, when they say "To be young depends on oneself, because if I am 40 years old, for example, and want to keep on being young, I can go out to ride a bike, to play, I can go to play a mini-soccer game with the other youths".

### 11.6.3 The Relationship Between Leisure and Quality of Life

There is a similarity among the judgments that rural youths make about leisure and quality of life because, in both cases they refer to happiness. For young workers quality of life is a situation that is achieved when is a good person with all people and when they are recognized as such by the community where one is immersed. Young

workers ratify the perception of quality of life as a situation that when it is obtained, happiness is achieved. In this sense, the quality of life they perceive as a good for them, is that which covers a whole spectrum of dimensions of human experience associated with vital satisfactions and to develop a sense of fulfillment and personal happiness. It is then a situation which is reached progressively with the meeting of personal goals which, at the same time, involve the family and the community. Happiness is achieved, according to their perceptions, when enjoying a good life, it is perceived as a fullness situation which has an extension in time, that should be reached and for which a permanent effort is required.

On the other hand, leisure is a concept that rural youths perceive as of limited times in which they develop activities that generate them satisfactions. They perceive happiness as the performance of these leisure activities and it becomes personal satisfaction that involves the family and the other people in the community. Accordingly, to live happily the leisure moments by the rural youths at the High Colombian Andean Mountains does not have any prolongation in time, but it does constitute one of the inputs necessary to achieve the way of life they consider good to be experienced by them.

In sum, rural youths in the high Colombian Andean Mountains assume quality of life as a fullness and happiness situation which is achieved in the course of time, after meeting a series of goals which provide full satisfactions. Leisure is assumed, on the other hand, as a limited situation in time, which provides full satisfactions and which becomes one of the necessary factors to reach a good quality of life.

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# The Program of Health Volunteer Promoters for OlderAdults: The Well-Being of the Volunteers at Leisure Time

**12**

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## Abstract

The study of ageing processes has gained increased attention in recent years, partly due to the growth of this population group (United Nations, World population prospects: The 2015 revision. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/publications/files/key_findings_wpp_2015.pdf. Accessed 25 Sep 2016, 2015). Research into this area has focused on older adult well-being (Au et al, Clinical Gerontologist 38:203–210, 2015) and the identification of factors having an influence on well-being at this stage of the life cycle (Carstensen, Current Directions in Psychological Science 4:151–156, 1995). These lines of research have emphasized the concept of active ageing (Diener and Chan, Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being 3:1–43, 2011). Active ageing supports the proposition that older adults should develop their abilities through activities that make a contribution to society: volunteering is one of such activities (Gonzales et al., The Gerontologist 55:252–261, 2015). It is worth noting that older persons experience free time as a major change to which they must adapt. When they can turn their free time into leisure time, they obtain countless benefits that have a positive impact on well-being. (Lloyd and Auld, Social Indicators Research 57:43–71, 2002). For this reason, volunteering is particularly important in old age. Volunteering has become a form of occupation of leisure time, socialization and a fundamental expression of solidarity for older adults (Montero García and Bedmar Moreno, Polis 9:61–84, 2010). In line with these developments, this chapter describes an intervention program called *Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults* and discusses its features, the line of work adopted and the activities carried out by the participants as their social and community-based participation is encouraged and training is provided on an ongoing basis.

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## 12.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe an intervention program called Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults, which has been running in a Hospital of the City of Buenos Aires since 2003.

The program is intended to provide health information and advice to the participants, particularly in connection with the use of existing health resources, and to foster the establishment of a social and community-oriented network. It focuses on optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance well-being as people age.

Giving visibility to the program is crucial as it has been running continuously since it was first implemented. Many older adults have taken part in it and it has been highly valued and recognized by the users and health professionals of the Hospital community.

As part of such recognition, the program was awarded the Third Prize in the Solidarity Contest "Social Action: Volunteering and the Common Good", an event organized by the Universal Peace Federation in which prizes were awarded to volunteers and organizations for their initiatives in 2013. In addition, the program was presented with the "Serna Aguirre" award in 2013 at the 30th Scientific Conference held at Santojanni Hospital, among others.

This intervention program is in line with the WHO's proposal to enact programs that promote active ageing in order to improve the health, participation and security of older people, in turn strengthening the social capital of the community. Being active is currently considered to be a key component of successful ageing. Therefore, remaining physically, socially and mentally active is essential (WHO 2015).

Along these lines, numerous research studies have been conducted on the benefits of leisure in old age. The levels of participation in leisure activities have been identified as determinants of life satisfaction and successful ageing (Ball et al. 2007; Brown et al. 2008; Fernández Mayoralas et al. 2014; Rubio Herrera et al. 2011; Kleiber 2012; Mannell and Dupuis 1994; Monteagudo et al. 2014).

Population ageing and current theoretical developments create the need to provide older adults with opportunities to actively continue to participate in society. Activities that are mainly aimed at helping other people or groups have proved to be great opportunities for active social insertion (Ehlers et al. 2011); and volunteer work—understood as unpaid work undertaken for the benefit of the community (Del Barrio 2007)—presents a fine example of this. Through volunteering, people can find someone they can help in their community, and this promotes a sense of solidarity and the creation of new social bonds (Zarebski 2011).

Social participation is a key factor influencing active ageing. The pursuit of activities in general and social participation in particular contribute to well-being as they enhance the means for social support and can involve gratifying tasks that provide a sense of purpose in old age (Au et al. 2015).

All these considerations show the importance of adopting strategies for the beneficial use of free time among aged adults through the design of volunteer programs such as the Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults.

This chapter reports a descriptive study that used the qualitative method, and identifies the effects of the Health Volunteer Promoters Program on older adults' well-being. For such purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted among twenty members of the volunteer program—five men and 15 women—who were all over 60 years of age.

In addition, the chapter explores the different activities comprised in the program, alongside with the participants' views and opinions. It concludes by looking at the significance of this intervention program as an enhancer of well-being and making relevant connections with current ageing theories.

## 12.2 Population Ageing

Population ageing is one of the dominant features of the twenty-first century. The world's population is undergoing an ageing process, caused by a growth in the number and proportion of older persons in virtually every country in the world (UN 2015).

For this reason, the study of ageing processes has gained increased attention, given the growth of this population group as a result of a demographic transition from high fertility and high mortality to low fertility and low mortality.

This has led to an increased number of persons reaching older ages (Howe and Jackson 2011).

The increase in life expectancy, coupled with a decline in birth rates, has given rise to a progressive ageing of the population. This shift means that, on average, people live to older ages and fewer children are born (Eberstadt 2010; WHO 2015).

Individuals aged 65 years and over make up a larger share of the population than in previous years. In addition, this group is projected to continue growing even more both in absolute terms and relative to the rest of the population (Bloom et al. 2016).

According to the data published by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN 2015) the number of people in the world aged 60 years or over is projected to grow by 56% by 2030, and by 2050, such number is projected to more than double its current size, reaching nearly 2.1 billion. Another significant data is that globally, the number of people aged 80 years or over is growing even more rapidly than the number of older persons overall. The proportion of people aged 80 years or over is projected to increase from 14% today to more than 20% in 2050 (UN 2015).

By 2025 the number of older people is projected to reach 1.2 billion. In 2002, there were 600 million older people. In addition, in the past only developed countries were home to aging populations, while today this is a phenomenon also experienced in developing countries.

In Europe, one in every five persons is aged over 60 years. By 2050, this proportion will rise to one in every three. In Latin America, by 2050 the elderly population will rise from almost 9% to 24%. It is estimated that by 2050 about 2.1 billion people, or 22% of the world's population, will be over 60 years. According to UN projections, the global median age will rise from about 30 years today to 36 years in 2050 (Mathers et al. 2015).

The rapid ageing of the population poses an unprecedented series of challenges. The gradual ageing of the world's population represents a historical achievement. Population ageing requires pressing measures to address the issues of health maintenance and the quality of life of older people (Bloom et al. 2015).

The World Health Organization has published the World Report on Ageing and Health. The Report warns that population ageing is one of the main concerns governments need to deal with. This rapid increase in the older population requires integral public action, as well as shifts in the framework for action on ageing (WHO 2015).

The Report makes reference to the profound implications of population ageing for health and health systems. In addition, it emphasizes that one of the most relevant questions is the maintenance of older persons' functional ability, based on a conception that healthy ageing is more than just the absence of disease (WHO 2015).

The document published by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations states that countries can tackle these challenges by anticipating the coming demographic shifts and proactively enacting policies in order to adapt to population ageing (UN 2015). This places special emphasis on the adoption of actions and policies to deal with the consequences of population ageing (Lee and Mason 2010).

## 12.3   The Concept of Ageing: A Shift in Approaches

The approaches to the analysis of ageing have been transformed since the late twentieth century, fundamentally with respect to the theoretical foundations on which they are based. Approaches to ageing traditionally emphasized almost exclusively health condition variables, and focused on pathologies and the level of deterioration as key elements of ageing studies (Fernández-Mayoralas et al. 2003; Zamarrón 2006).

From the standpoint of this traditional conception, old age is marked by deterioration, frailty and progressive losses (Charles and Carstensen 2007).

Emphasis on this type of elements has resulted in a neglect of the positive aspects, such as well-being, satisfaction, optimism and happiness. Such neglect can mainly be attributed to the fact that the focus of psychology was confined to the functions of the psyche and the pathological

aspects of subjects (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000).

The study of ageing from a positive dimension has given rise to a new line of work (Gutiérrez et al. 2006). For this reason, a new paradigm has started to emerge which is focused on the more adaptive and positive aspects of older people. Such paradigm is variously known as "Healthy ageing", "Ageing well", "Successful ageing", "Competent ageing", "Active Ageing" and "Positive Aging" (Fernandez Ballesteros et al. 2010).

Thus, ageing studies have increasingly focused on the identification of variables contributing to older people's quality of life and the search for indicators of successful ageing (Strawbridge et al. 2002; Tomás Meléndez and Navarro 2008; Triadó 2003; Yanguas 2006).

On the basis of such changes, studies veered away from the hegemonic point of view prevailing in the nineteenth century towards investigating the positive dimensions of ageing (Iacub 2006). This has opened a broad field of research into the abilities, potentials and resources of older persons.

Thus, great emphasis is placed today on the concept of active ageing (Diener and Chan 2011; Nimrod and Ben-Shem 2015). The term "active ageing" was adopted by the World Health Organization in the late 1990s in order to convey a more inclusive message than that of "healthy ageing" and recognize the factors that affect the manner in which individuals and populations age (Kalache and Kickbusch 1997).

The WHO (2002) defines active ageing as the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. It permits people to realize their potential for physical, social and mental well-being across the life course and to participate in society in accordance with their needs, wishes and capacities.

According to the WHO reports, interventions must be aimed at achieving the maximum functional ability, increasing and maintaining intrinsic capacity and allowing people with a decline in functional ability to do things they consider important (WHO 2015).

Primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, along with health promotion, is crucial for any intervention involving older adults' health. In general terms, preventive strategies should be aimed at developing individuals' health-related strengths and resources (WHO 2002).

## 12.4 Older Adults' Well-Being

Since the twentieth century, well-being has been the focus of attention for researchers of different disciplinary fields, including psychology (Diener and Suh 2000). Such academic debates stem from two old philosophical traditions: the hedonistic approach, which is concerned with the study of subjective well-being, and the eudaimonic approach, which centers on psychological well-being (Ryan and Deci 2001; Vázquez et al. 2009).

The hedonistic tradition includes the study of life satisfaction, subjective well-being and positive emotions (Diener 2000; Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999; Pavot and Diener 2008; Pinguart and Sorensen 2001). Diener (2000) was one of the pioneers in providing a scientific definition of subjective well-being. According to this definition, subjective well-being is the cognitive and affective evaluation that an individual makes of his or her own life.

The hedonistic approach focuses on the study of subjective well-being and seeks to answer the questions of how and why people experience their life in a positive manner. It takes account of both affective reactions (feelings of pleasure and pain) and cognitive judgements (interest, boredom, enjoyment, and sorrow). This approach is closely connected with the concept of happiness (Lyubomirsky 2008). It involves a global evaluation of one's life opportunities, the course of events one is confronted with and the resulting emotional experiences (Blanco and Díaz 2005).

On the other hand, the second approach, termed eudaimonic approach, studies psychological well-being as an indicator of an individual's positive functioning, which allows him or her to develop his or her abilities and, therefore, his or her personal growth. It centers on the development of human potential, the manner in which individuals face life challenges, and the efforts they make towards the pursuit of their objectives

(Ryan and Deci 2001). This approach takes into account individuals' evaluations of their circumstances and functioning in society. Therefore, the eudaimonic approach focuses on well-being as the result of the realization of all of an individual's potentialities at a full level of psychological functioning (Vázquez et al. 2009).

Ryff (1989) is one of the most prominent researchers in the field of psychological well-being. This author proposes a multi-dimensional model of psychological well-being that comprises the following six dimensions: a positive evaluation of self and of one's past life (self-acceptance), a perception of continued personal development (personal growth), a belief that life has a purpose and meaning (purpose in life), the development and maintenance of quality and trustworthy relationships with others (positive relationships with others), an ability to effectively manage one's own life and the environment in order to satisfy needs and desires (environmental mastery), and a sense of personal self-determination (autonomy) (Ryff and Singer 1998).

The study of well-being is particularly relevant to older people, as they are undergoing a stage in which their life is affected by quantitative limitations (Villar et al. 2003).

Thus, ageing studies have increasingly focused on the identification of the factors that have an influence on this stage of the life cycle. Along these lines, different research studies point to the significance of studying well-being in old age (Au et al. 2015; Dzuka and Dalbert 2000; Read et al. 2015; Steptoe et al. 2015; Steptoe et al. 2014).

Studies on subjective well-being have shown that older people experience levels that are comparable to, or higher than, those of other life cycles (Carstensen 1995, Lawton 1996; Mroczek and Kolarz 1998). The findings suggest that older populations, although less healthy and less productive in general, can be satisfied with their lives (Carstensen and Charles 1998; Diener and Suh 2000). In this sense, numerous studies have attempted to elucidate a phenomenon known as paradox of well-being in old age, which evidences the existence of high well-being indices, in spite of difficulties, problems or risk factors usually present at such stage of life (Zamarrón 2006).

It is worth mentioning that life expectancy in old age requires individuals to adjust their objectives, emotions and plans to such time limit. In addition, as people age, they usually set more realistic and plausible goals (Zamarrón 2006). In turn, the elderly seem to have high levels of resilience that allow positive adaptation in adverse circumstances (Staudinger and Fleeson 1996). In addition, older individuals generally have good control over their emotions (Carstensen 1995; Lawton 1996).

A study on this topic has revealed a U-shaped relationship between well-being and age in wealthy English-speaking countries (the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand), with the lowest well-being levels in middle age, and the highest in childhood and old age. However, it is worth clarifying that this pattern is not universal: respondents in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe show a large progressive decline in well-being with age, falling after age 55. In Latin America and the Caribbean, life satisfaction tends to decline with age, although not as dramatically as in the Eastern European countries. In Africa, well-being shows little change with age, thus indicating that life satisfaction is low at all ages (Levy 2015).

The above study shows the variations in older populations' well-being in different countries. Research was also conducted in different countries in order to compare factors having an influence on life satisfaction, taking account of cultural differences. Four key areas were identified that influence life satisfaction: job or daily activities, social contacts and family, health and income (Kapteyn et al. 2013).

Research on well-being in old age usually takes into account socio-demographic variables such as socioeconomic status, education, marital status, and employment (Steptoe et al. 2015). In addition to social relationships, an individual's value of his or her own health and the subjective evaluation of his or her resources may be predictors for assessing well-being in older populations (Patrick et al. 2001; Read et al. 2015).

The pursuit of activities is another variable that can have an impact on older persons' well-

being. Smith et al. (2014) found that older people report high levels of well-being when they do physical exercise, work or engage in volunteering work. A study found that older persons that do physical exercise on a regular basis report higher levels of life satisfaction and subjective health (Withall et al. 2014).

Marital status is yet another variable having an impact on well-being in old age. Pinguart and Sorensen (2001) point out that married older individuals have an important source of support from their partners. Therefore, marital quality is considered to be a predictor of well-being among older persons (Diener and Suh 2000).

Research has identified a positive correlation between subjective well-being and social relationships. The findings show that those individuals that have social relationships reported a lower score in depression and stress levels, and find more satisfaction with life (Carmel 2015; Fuller-Iglesias 2015). Along these lines, lower levels of well-being were related to loneliness and isolation (Shankar et al. 2015). Another study found that those individuals experiencing greater life satisfaction had received more social support than those with a lower level of life satisfaction (Deng et al. 2010).

In terms of gender differences in well-being among older adults, the evidence is not consistent. Some studies have found that women report lower levels of well-being (Alvarado et al. 2008). However, other studies have identified higher levels of well-being in women (Ramsey and Gentzler 2014).

It is worth mentioning that a low level of well-being is associated with an increased risk of illness, depression, premature death, heart disease, diabetes and disability (Steptoe et al. 2014). Another study found a negative correlation between life satisfaction and physical and mental health problems (Withall et al. 2014).

On the other hand, a positive correlation has been found between subjective well-being and subjective health (Olsson et al. 2014; St. John et al. 2015; Von Humboldt et al. 2014). Individuals generally associate good life with good health, longevity and subjective well-being (Marques et al. 2015).

There is a growing research literature that suggests that well-being can even act as a protective factor of health, reduce the risk of chronic physical disease and promote longevity (Chida and Steptoe 2008; Dolan and White 2007; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005; Vázquez et al. 2009).

## 12.5    Leisure Time in Old Age

As the ageing population grows and life expectancy increases, concerns are raised as to how to lead a happier and healthier life: in other words, how to age successfully. In this regard, the beneficial use of leisure time is an important aspect of successful ageing (Lee and Payne 2016).

As is widely known, time is organized differently in old age. Older people have more time available due to their disengagement from work. This leads to a new lifestyle that is characterized by, among other factors, an increase in leisure time (Singh and Paramjeet 2006).

In general terms, older persons experience leisure time as a major change to which they must adapt. Many benefits are derived from engaging in leisure activities during leisure time, all of which have a positive impact on older people's well-being (Lloyd and Auld 2002).

Numerous research studies have been conducted on the benefits of leisure in old age. The levels of participation in leisure activities have been identified as determinants of life satisfaction in old age and successful ageing. The findings show the benefits of leisure among older adults and its positive impact on ageing (Ball et al. 2007; Brown et al. 2008; Fernández Mayorales et al. 2014; Kleiber 2012; Mannell and Dupuis 1994; Monteagudo et al. 2014; Sánchez-García et al. 2011).

Leitner and Leitner (2004) summarize the benefits of leisure for older adults and point out that, depending on the type of activity, physiological benefits can also be obtained as greater mobility and energy are achieved. Older adults can also derive social, psychological and emotional benefits from leisure activities, as these activities bring about greater optimism, improved

perceived health and higher self-esteem, among other aspects.

Thus, studies have found that a greater involvement in leisure pursuits translates into higher levels of subjective well-being (Dupuis and Smale 1995), reduced feelings of loneliness (Mullins and Mushel 1992), improved mood (Lee and Ishii-Kuntz 1987), an increased ability to cope with changes in old age (Kelly et al.1987) and improved physical well-being, mental health, social functioning and functional autonomy (Yarmohammadian and Yazdkhasti 2010).

García-Martín (2002) points out that most studies carried out on the benefits derived from older adults' participation in leisure activities have reported satisfactory results.

Research studies have found that individuals that feel bored in their leisure time are more prone to become involved in risky behavior and experience a decline in mental and physical health. Reduced social participation due to an absence of occupations may result in depression and a decreased health condition (Adams et al. 2011).

In addition, the pursuit of free-time activities seems to be a determining factor for cognitive, psychosocial and emotional health, and it can also prevent cognitive impairment (Clark et al. 2012). From this perspective, Moruno and Romero (2004) state that the pursuit of activities leads to improved health, prevents illness and disability and results in greater psychological well-being.

Van Ingen and Van Eijck (2009) found that outdoor social activities, sports and voluntary work present the strongest associations with life satisfaction among older adults.

The above findings illustrate the significant role of leisure in an individual's life and highlight the value of leisure as a tool to help older people experience successful ageing (Brown et al. 2008).

A prominent explanation of how leisure is related to well-being is that leisure provides opportunities for personal growth and self-realization. From this perspective, leisure activities can provide opportunities for people to continuously develop their abilities and capabilities, and feel good with themselves. Leisure has an impact on mental and physical health as it facilitates coping with life stress and daily problems (Coleman and Iso-Ahola 1993).

Participation in free-time social and community activities is a major factor of active ageing (Heenan 2011). These leisure activities entail a level of commitment and share some common features with work with respect to the organization of time and the generation of feelings of social usefulness. For this reason, volunteer work allows older people to become active again and experience feelings of social competence (Bazo 2002).

Thus, over the past few years volunteering has grown significantly among older adults who, in addition to attending to their obligations, devote time to helping others. Volunteering has become a form of socialization, occupation of leisure time and a fundamental expression of solidarity for older adults (Montero García and Bedmar Moreno 2010).

Along these lines, health policies for older adults should not be exclusively focused on individual interventions, but rather on a prevention-oriented, community-based approach. Initiatives should be implemented in order to promote healthy lifestyles and preventive care that translate into active ageing (Jeste et al. 2016).

## 12.6   Volunteering as a Factor Promoting Well-Being in Old Age

Active ageing is becoming more and more relevant as population ageing emphasizes the importance of creating opportunities for older adults to continue to participate in society. In addition, there is a growing need to develop sustainable means to assist older adults with their needs (Au et al. 2015). Active ageing supports the proposition that older adults should develop their abilities by carrying out activities that make a contribution to society: volunteering is one of such activities (Gonzales et al. 2015).

Social participation is one of the main determinants of active ageing, as it fosters older adults' involvement in their communities. This makes volunteering in old age particularly relevant.

Volunteering is unpaid work undertaken for the benefit of the community (Del Barrio 2007). It concerns activities mainly aimed at helping other people or groups, thus contributing to society (Ehlers et al. 2011).

Older adults usually have more leisure time, as a result of retirement from work or changes in family structure. Thus, they can find someone they can help in their community, and this promotes a sense of solidarity and the creation of new social bonds (Zarebski 2011).

Social policy applications of active ageing have recently focused on volunteering as a valuable and beneficial contribution that older people can make to their communities. The benefits of reciprocal contribution are worthy of note, as older people need and want to contribute to society and these contributions are beneficial for their sense of identity and well-being (Stephens et al. 2015).

Social participation is an all-important strategy in promoting successful ageing. It has been shown to improve older adults' health, generate well-being, and favor learning, while at the same time help is provided to others (Chen 2016).

Different research studies highlight the importance of being active in old age and the positive effects it has on older adults' well-being. It is worth noting that volunteering not only provides a service to the community, but it also promotes the physical and mental health of the participants (Onyx and Warburton 2003).

Volunteering leads to increased self-esteem and feelings of usefulness, and it improved mood, older people's morale and general health status. Older volunteers report feelings of social satisfaction, find the occupation of their time meaningful and value what they do (Agulló et al. 2002).

One of the benefits of volunteering is the encounter with others. The diversification of support provided in these spaces results in the establishment of enhanced social networks (Zarebski 2011). For this reason, volunteering is a major source of sociability, self-validation and greater social networks (Dávila and Díaz-Morales 2009). Participation as a volunteer contributes to the development of positive emotions, facilitates

support and social interactions, and provides social and psychological resources (Montero García and Bedmar Moreno 2010).

Volunteering allows re-signifying spaces and learning, it makes debate and the exchange of ideas possible, and thus generates new projects. It also allows removing stereotypes and leads to higher self-esteem (Zarebski and Knopoff 2001). Social support has been found to protect the health of older adults and contribute to life satisfaction (Vivaldi and Barra 2012). In addition, numerous studies have reported that social isolation, loneliness or loss of social support are related to the risk of illness and reduce life expectancy (Berkman 1995; Davis et al. 1998; House et al. 1988).

Another benefit of volunteering is that older volunteers report higher levels of well-being as compared to non-volunteers (Au et al. 2015; Dulin 2015; Post 2005; Tabassum et al. 2016; Windsor et al. 2008). Volunteers perceive themselves as healthier and with a better functioning of the cognitive, emotional and social domains (Shmortkin et al. 2003). In turn, volunteering provides opportunities for compensation, affiliation, recognition and gratification, generating a protective effect that leads to feelings of well-being (Cutler and Hendricks 2000). Volunteering has also been related to an increase in happiness (Dulin et al. 2012; Midlarsky and Kahana 2007; Wheeler et al. 1998).

In addition, studies have shown that older volunteer report an improved mood (Dulin et al. 2001; Dulin and Hill 2003). One of the most promising findings is that volunteering seems to have a stronger association with well-being among older persons at the lowest levels of the socioeconomic scale (Borgonovi 2008; Morrow-Howell et al. 2009). Moreover, older volunteers report increased life satisfaction (Van Willigen 2000). Helping others has a positive impact on life satisfaction as participation in activities leads to feeling of self-realization and self-respect (Bukov et al. 2002). Wu and Kanamori (2005) point out that volunteers show more self-efficacy, greater life satisfaction and lower levels of distress than non-volunteers. A study carried out by

Thoits and Hewitt (2001) found that volunteers report higher levels of happiness and perceived self-esteem. Volunteering in old age has been correlated with improved physical health and fewer reports of depression symptoms (Greenfield and Marks 2004; Lum and Lightfoot 2005; Morrow-Howell et al. 2003; Musick and Wilson 2003; Musick et al. 1999; Thoits and Hewitt 2001), as well as lower mortality rates compared to non-volunteers (Harris and Thoresen 2005; Lum and Lightfoot 2005; Moen et al. 1989; Shmortkin et al. 2003; Rogers et al. 2016).

Therefore, volunteering is an important tool to enhance older adults' health (Windsor et al. 2008). Both receiving and providing help are predictors of reported health (Schwartz et al. 2003).

The evidence found in these studies suggests that the participation of older adults in volunteer activities can contribute to their successful ageing and has a positive correlation with well-being (Schwingel et al. 2009).

Morrow-Howell et al. (2003) state that these findings provide a high degree of confidence that volunteering has a positive impact on older adults' well-being. It is argued that successful ageing should be analyzed within broader social and cultural contexts and include psychological, social and physical dimensions (Cheng et al. 2015).

## 12.7   Methodological Design

A descriptive study was conducted with the aim of presenting a detailed analysis of the situations under research. The study used the qualitative method, which considers the individual as a protagonist of research processes and recognizes the importance of the context and meanings for actors (Tonon 2015).

Qualitative methods have been generally applied to little known subjects, which explains why most of those studies are merely exploratory and are likewise used in circumstances that demand a revision of existing theories (Tonon 2015, p. 6).

Qualitative studies are organized from generated ideas in relation with the importance of the analysis of the issue, with a core and keys of interpretation, not necessarily a hypothesis. The research purposes are focused on understanding something, gaining some insight into what is going on and why this is happening (Maxwell 1996, p.16).

### 12.7.1  Participants

The study was conducted with twenty older people—five men and 15 women—all over the age of 60 and all of them members of the Program of Health Volunteer Promoters for Aged Adults offered at Santojanni Hospital in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The participants selected had at least 1 year's attendance at the Program.

### 12.7.2  Instrument

The technique used was the semi-structured interview, defined as an encounter between individuals and a technique that allows reading, understanding and analyzing individuals, social contexts and situations, and which creates at the same time communicational situations and acts. This approach departs from the traditional reductionist view that considers semi-structured interviews as a simple tool for data collection (Tonon 2009, p.71).

The semi-structured interviews were aimed at identifying the effects of the program on older adults' well-being. The interviews revolved around the following topics: a brief anamnesis, reasons for joining the program, initial expectations, beliefs related to old age, shifts experienced by the members in their ageing processes and changes brought about by the participation in the program.

For the analysis of data, the thematic analysis was used, defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 81) as a "…a method for identifying, analyzing

and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the data in detail".

## 12.8 Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults

This section reviews the features of the program Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults and describes the line of work adopted, along with an analysis of the continuous training the participants receive and the social participation and community-oriented activities they are encouraged to undertake.

The program was first implemented in 2003 at Santojanni Hospital, located in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina, as part of a joint effort with other hospitals. The organization was undertaken by the hospital along with Argentina's National Social Services Institute for Pensioners and the Health program for Older Adults run by the Government of the City of Buenos Aires. From the second year onwards, the Social Service of Santojanni Hospital took the coordination of the program under its care, and is assisted by the Health Program for Older Adults on a permanent basis.

The program is intended to provide health information and advice to the participants, particularly in connection with the use of existing health resources, and to foster the establishment of a social and community-oriented network. The program focuses on optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance well-being as people age.

The Couse is held once a week, from March to November, with a winter break in between. There are no age limits or requirements to join at a particular time of the year. While new members have joined in over the years, some have taken part in the program since it was first run.

Participation rates vary from one period to another. While the average number of participants is 28, some activities have been attended by more than 40 people.

Seventy-five percent of the attendees are women, with an average age of 75 years, their ages ranging between 65 and 84 years old. Most of the participants are widowed.

The program is structured to begin with a theoretical phase, usually consisting of a class delivered by a health professional specialized in the issue to be dealt with in each class. Issues include diabetes, hypertension, nutrition, first aid, healthy ageing, etc. In addition to providing the attendees with training, the content of each session often works as a triggering topic that is then elaborated upon in workshops. Different techniques are used to re-elaborate the information received and to articulate it with the attendees' own experiences. Following the theoretical session, the issues are analyzed in small groups and then a final joint work is produced.

The team of professionals that participate in the program comprises social workers, psychomotricians, nurses, nutritionists, psychologists, medical doctors and other professionals of the health team, who provide help by planning classes and/or workshops for the different issues included in the program.

The possibility of exchange across the different disciplines enriches the participants' point of view, not only with the provision of information but also with training that—taking account of the body, emotions and feelings—allows the participants to cope with tasks in an intellectual manner, and, more importantly, with an overarching integral perspective that includes thinking, talking, feeling and doing with others and for others.

This approach is intended to develop strategies that allow older adults to have more autonomy over their own lives, while at the same time their quality of life is enhanced by means of group activities of mutual help and exchange, on the basis of a network of support, strengthening of social ties and search for solutions to certain community problems.

Based on a preventive-oriented approach, the general objective of the Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults is to generate strategies for the promotion, prevention and protection of the recipient population's health. It is also intended to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent risky conducts by fostering the development of habits and customs of self-care and the care of peers. These objectives are achieved through a number of different devices. The older

adults participating in the program carry out different activities aimed at promoting health and preventive actions.

The program comprises the following activities: health promotion and disease prevention campaigns, and the design and set-up of a mobile library in a pediatric waiting room.

We provide below a brief description of each of these activities and strategies proposed for the beneficial use of older adults' leisure time.

### 12.8.1 Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Campaigns

The Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults includes health promotion and disease prevention campaigns in parks, health centers and institutions within the health program area. The older adults act as volunteer promoters and play a central role in this activity: they publicize the campaign in the neighborhood by, among other actions, distributing leaflets in shops, schools, retirement centers and other establishments, and they are also responsible for most of the activities involved in the campaigns.

Once the public approaches the site where the health promotion and disease prevention campaign is being held, they are greeted by the promoters, who give them a number to organize the turn in which they will be assisted, together with leaflets with information about the health campaign. In this way, the promoters organize the circulation of the participants in the activity.

The first activity is conducted by a group of promoters who write the personal details of the person on a card. This information is recorded, as well as the answers provided regarding previous check-ups and physical activity. After this first stage, other promoters check the person's blood pressure—some promoters have been trained for this purpose during the program. The next stage involves a nutrition survey that also serves the purpose of detecting a lack of financial resources or situations of loneliness. This allows the social workers that participate in the health promotion and disease prevention campaign to make the correct referral and specialized transfer. At another table, students in the last year of the Nutrition course, supervised by a nutritionist of the hospital staff, check the person's weight, height and abdominal girth and they let the person know about applicable risk factors.

A new activity has been included in recent years with memory-exercise games. This activity is carried out by a group of promoters that have been specifically trained by a psychologist during the memory-improvement workshop. The last stage in the health promotion and disease prevention campaign consists of a blood glucose test done by a nurse and a promoter on all attendees. While the campaign is being conducted, another group of promoters is responsible for announcing it on loudspeakers and distributing leaflets inviting any person passing by the site to participate in the campaign's health check-ups.

Diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes and other disorders caused by nutritional deficiencies are commonly asymptomatic and, therefore, these check-ups are important, not only as a way to come closer to the community but also as a means to detect these diseases on time. Primary prevention comprises all preventive activities carried out before the problem appears. Therefore, foresight and early detection of problems specific to older adults and the community as a whole become essential.

Two campaigns are planned for each term that makes up the program. In selecting the site, the organizers take into account the place that may guarantee the participation of the largest possible number of people. In these campaigns, there are approximately 84 participants using these services.

The health promotion and disease prevention campaign is an event that older adult volunteer promoters carry out with great enthusiasm—they quickly distribute tasks among themselves. There is a significant active participation and each promoter performs the tasks and roles established until the end of the activity. They generally arrive at the campaign site earlier than the professional staff and they prepare the different materials that will be used. They organize among themselves all the aspects of the health promotion and disease prevention campaign.

As discussed above, older adults play a central role in these campaigns and, through this work, they feel useful and recover an important social role by collaborating in a voluntary and disinterested manner, also multiplying the health message for "others". This work for the community determines and gives significance to their role as promoters. They are given a new role, an important function within society, which allows them to be integrated and leave their own legacy.

This type of activities has been found to help older adults improve their skill acquisition, stimulate critical thinking and their ability to adapt better to reality. Their role as promoters allows them to value their own knowledge, as it promotes and facilitates the development of their potentialities. These campaigns aim at improving older adults' living conditions and health levels and promoting autonomy and well-being among the older population. Disease prevention constitutes an intervention intended to prevent the appearance of new diseases by changing unhealthy habits or lifestyles.

Through these health promotion and disease prevention campaigns, promoters and staff professionals get close to the community, but mainly to the older population, who are offered health guidance, favoring an early detection of diseases and access to the health care system.

### 12.8.2 Set-Up of a Mobile Library

This project was proposed by one of the older adult volunteer promoters who, in 2010, found out that there were books stacked in a hospital cabinet that were not serving any purpose. The promoter had experience as a librarian and offered to organize the books in order to set up a mobile library for patients staying in the hospital. The volunteers taking part in the project were so enthusiastic that they became actively involved and received donations of more books as well as a mobile cabinet for their storage.

Before the mobile library was finished, a pilot test was conducted and a number of promoters visited different patients staying in the hospital offering them, and sometimes their relatives, the list of books available. In addition to fostering reading, it is worth noting that, in many cases, the book serves as an "excuse" and what the patients value the most is the contact with the promoters, who disinterestedly share their time, attention and affection.

From the very beginning, the main purpose of the project was to improve the quality of the patients' stay in the hospital, offering them entertainment and favoring their recovery, reducing their feelings of isolation and loneliness. Reading may help overcome the anxiety usually experienced by hospitalized patients. These activities help restore the balance that is lost when a person becomes sick by serving the purpose of distracting the patient, making him or her forget about his or her condition—at least for a while—and putting him or her in contact with the outside world, with the consequent improvement in mood.

As stated above, this project was fully conceived and put into practice by the promoters themselves; it is, therefore, completely self-managed and places promoters at the center. With their work, promoters feel useful and recover an important social role by collaborating in a selfless and disinterested manner with the patients.

This work for the community determines and gives a sense of purpose to their role as promoters. They are given a new role, an important function within society, which allows them to be integrated and help themselves by helping others.

### 12.8.3 Design of a Play and Recreation Area in a Pediatric Waiting Room

This was a self-managed project that was implemented in the second term of 2013. One of the volunteer promoters was interested in participating in the library expressed her wish to read to children that were in the pediatric room. Accompanied by staff of the program, she talked to the head of the Pediatrics Unit, who considered that the activity would be complex to implement in the pediatric room itself but that it was possible to create a reading area for children in the waiting room.

Soon after the promoter started the project she noticed that, given the different ages of the children, it was difficult to find a story that appealed to everyone. She did not feel discouraged and requested the assistance of her fellow promoters to collect different games for different ages in order to keep the children entertained while they were waiting for their appointment with the doctor. She received donations and contributions from other promoters as well as from her own grandchildren who, in her own words, are "excited and proud" to see her so deeply involved in volunteer work.

Equipped with games, paper, markers and, in her words, "an incredible desire to put a smile on children's faces", the promoter who organized the activity participates once a week in this play area for children in the waiting room. A few months ago, a fellow promoter joined the activity as a permanent participant and there are also other promoters that collaborate sporadically or contribute with ideas and games. The promoter who created this space mentions that many children are in the waiting room since 5 in the morning and, therefore, they are happy to find a place where they can have fun—some do not want to stop playing when they are called by the doctor. She also mentions that many mothers tell her how grateful and comforted they are that their children are not suffering while they wait for the doctor.

## 12.9 Analysis the Health Volunteer Promoter Program as a Factor for Promoting Well-Being in Older Adults

In this section we present a description of the main aspects related to well-being on the basis of the narratives of the older adults participating in the Health Volunteer Promoter Program, and we make relevant connections with current theories.

Through the Health Volunteer Promoter Course older adults are trained to carry out supportive health promotion, prevention and protection activities within the community. The approach implemented considers older adults as

an important social resource, encouraging fruitful and creative exchanges.

Regarding the participants, the program allows them to feel useful and gives them a sense of purpose in life. Having a life project favors their self-esteem and improves their feelings of well-being. During a workshop, one of the participants mentioned that: *"I was alone before I found out about this program. I can't believe I'm now sharing this with all of you and being able to help people in my neighborhood…"* (Female participant, aged 77).

Confirming the findings of this research, different studies have found that volunteering contributes to increased levels of self-efficacy and vital satisfaction (Agulló et al. 2002; Leitner and Leitner 2004; Wu and Kanamori (2005) and enhanced self-esteem (Thoits and Hewitt 2001). In this sense, Bukov et al. (2002) point out that those activities that involve helping other people give individuals a feeling of self-fulfillment and self-respect.

The different activities included in the program are aimed at creating a space where older people can regain roles and generate autonomous projects they will find gratifying. This purpose may be inferred from a comment by one of the participants: "*Here we find a place for us, we feel valued and useful, we learn and teach at the same time…*" (Female participant, aged 84).

In other words, volunteering creates feelings of social usefulness, it allows individuals to regain feelings of social competence (Bazo 2002) and further enhances functional autonomy (Yarmohammadian and Yazdkhasti 2010) and feelings of social satisfaction (Agulló et al. 2002). As old people have more free time, they can have a significant participative role in society. Therefore, volunteering fosters socialization, the occupation of free time and solidarity (Montero García and Bedmar Moreno 2010).

The program also promotes a beneficial use of leisure time for older adults, who can now spend time helping others, learning, participating in activities and promoting contact with other people. During a workshop, one of the participants stated the following:

"*I retired after working my whole life (as a bus driver). I didn't know how to occupy my time and*

*I was finding it hard to adapt to my new life when I was invited to the program, a year and a half ago. I had never taken part in a space like this and after the first class I realized that it was a serious job. Here, I'm learning to age in a healthy manner. My family notices that I feel different and they always listen to the things I learn in the program*" (Male participant, aged 68).

According to Mannell (2007) leisure activities have been characterized as a way of keeping one's mind busy, and consequently, people are distracted from distressing thoughts caused by stressful life circumstances.

In this respect, Lloyd and Auld (2002) state that when free time becomes leisure time, it provides numerous benefits that have an impact on aged people's well-being. Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993) point out that this is mainly due to the fact that leisure time creates opportunities for people to develop capabilities and resources, with a consequent impact on self-esteem.

Leisure activities have also been identified as a means to keep the mind busy and they consequently allow people to distract themselves from distressing thoughts that may be caused by stressful situations in life. As stated by one of the participants: "*This was a difficult year for me since I lost relatives and lifelong friends, but the group helped me recover from these losses; I think that if I had stayed at home, I would've fallen into depression. Far from that, now I promote the campaigns, I attend the program and I'm doing things I had never imagined I'd do and I'm enjoying it*" (Male participant, aged 68).

In addition, Adams and collaborators (2011) argue that those individuals that feel bored in their free time are prone to risky behavior and often engage in destructive activities. Moreover, they are generally in poorer physical and mental condition.

Hence, doing leisure activities during one's free time contributes to health promotion and disease prevention, as they have a major impact on cognitive, psychosocial and emotional health (Clark et al. 2012; Moruno and Romero 2004).

It is also argued that losses may be offset by gains. Since old age need not only imply losses, the same limitations open up the possibility to enjoy things that could not be enjoyed before. In this respect, one participant stated: "*At home they look at me differently. When I retired I was getting sick, and since I started to come here, I've ventured to do things I would never have imagined doing…*" (Male participant, aged 73).

For this reason, it can be stated that volunteering is an important source of self-validation and promotes enhanced social networks (Dávila and Díaz-Morales 2009). Engagement in volunteer work fosters the development of positive emotions, facilitates support and social interaction and provides social and psychological resources (Montero García & Bedmar Moreno 2010).

Regarding the group's dynamics, there is great flexibility not only to accept proposals from the coordinators, but also to look for and generate the group's own proposals, thus working in a self-managed way. By way of example, the promoters honored the commitment taken at a hemotherapy class that they would arrange an interview with the local newspaper in order to promote the important role of blood donation.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the program favors learning by incorporating information about health promotion and prevention campaigns. In this respect, one of the participants stated: "*This space allows me to work with myself and with others in order to reach a healthy old age. I'm thankful to all and I'm looking forward to what will come next, where it will take me, what will happen…*" (Female participant, aged 67).

In addition to the above-mentioned benefits, it has been demonstrated that volunteering fosters learning (Chen 2016). In providing opportunities for personal growth, volunteering allows people to develop abilities and capabilities and exchange ideas with others (Knopoff and Zarebski 2000).

It is also worth mentioning the group's support in coping with bereavement. As an example, when one of the members of the group died, the others wrote a letter that was published on the website in which they participate, recognizing her work in the community. They also decided to name after her one of the libraries they run, particularly since the promoter who died had been one of the founding members of that space. This

shows how they work on the possibility of transcending in others and leaving a legacy, thus strengthening their commitment to the continuity of the activities. The group's support also helps in coping with the loss of close relatives, as was the case with one participant who lost her husband soon after she started the program. She commented: "*I started this year and, even if losing my husband was terrible, here I was able to search for myself in others, recognize myself in others; here I was able to open up and say what I feel and think and feel respected. I feel the support, solidarity and love that pervade this space. It was a refuge in times of suffering…*" (Female participant, aged 73).

This is related to the benefits of social support for older adults' well-being. Different studies have found that people that have social relationships report lower levels of depression and stress, and find more satisfaction with life (Carmel 2015; Deng et al. 2010; Fuller-Iglesias 2015).

According to Zarebski (2011), volunteering provides opportunities for setting off losses against gains, that is, it contributes to diminishing the negative impact by means of new acquisitions. The social support provided by the other members allows processing losses in a less distressing manner.

It is also to be noted that in cases of illness the group works as a support network. This was evidenced when one of the participants suffered an accident and broke her hip. Many of her fellow volunteers took turns to look after her in hospital until a niece that lived in another province was able to come and take care of her. This also evidences their self-management approach in personal situations, where they call each other on the phone and help each other outside activities within the program. In this respect, one of the participants stated that "*solidarity begins at home*" (Female participant, aged 63).

Regarding the incorporation of new participants to the program, the promoters are flexible and assist in making the new members feel welcome by being supportive and guiding them until they integrate into the different activities. This shows that they find giving more important than receiving, which implies an ability to accept others and their own differences.

As stated by Zarebski (2011), one of the benefits of becoming involved in volunteer work is the encounter with others, as it allows diversifying support and creating an enhanced social network. Social support is considered to be a health protector for older adults and to contribute to life satisfaction (Vivaldi and Barra 2012).

The program gives the promoters the opportunity to question myths and prejudices usually faced by older people. They take a critical stance towards the role that society gives them. This may be evidenced by a comment made by one of the participants: "*…an old person still has feelings, emotions, thoughts; the heart doesn't grow old… People make us believe that since we are old we are useless and they bombard us from the outside… Here we realize that we can be useful, that we can help… I ventured to do things I would never have done…*" (Male participant, aged 74).

Thus, the program provides a space where cultural definitions may be reformulated. The participants find a place that allows them to escape the social exclusion to which they are sometimes condemned. They are able to recognize themselves in others and design daily life projects centered in community-oriented activities that they find rewarding. In this way, they strengthen their self-esteem as their word becomes valuable to others. In finding their own space, they gain increased self-confidence and are able to interact with the outside world, in relationships of mutual exchange and equality, as the main characters of their own story.

This is in line with Knopoff and Zarebski's findings (2000) that volunteering provides opportunities for aged adults to discuss and exchange ideas, overcome stereotyped ideas and strengthen self-esteem.

It follows from the statements above that volunteering opens up spaces for older adults to participate in groups and carry out meaningful activities within the context in which the group works. These activities can then become a means for the members to create a group of belonging which provides a space for understanding, listening and re-creating the life process.

## 12.10 Conclusions

The participative structure method adopted in the Health Volunteer Promoter Course for Older Adults and the different activities developed under the program recognize older persons as active subjects—as opposed to the traditional approach that views aging persons as dependent—and allow challenging the prejudiced positions that reduce their possibilities.

As has been discussed above, being active is a key factor for ageing well (WHO 2015). The possibility of being actively engaged in society allows older adults to feel part of their environment.

The interaction with the community through campaigns in public spaces constitutes an effective strategy, not only to materialize the promoter's role, but also to put in practice the important community activities of health promotion and disease prevention by advising the public on healthy habits and early detection of diseases.

In addition, the creative use of leisure time encourages promoters to develop and search for their fulfilment and the realization of their potentialities in order to make the changes necessary to improve their quality of life.

Different studies have identified the role of leisure in an individual's life and its value as a tool to help older persons age successfully (Brown et al. 2008; Windsor et al. 2008). In addition, volunteering has been found to be a relevant means for the promotion of older adults' health (Windsor et al. 2008).

The participants' autonomy and self-esteem were encouraged all throughout the program, leading to self-managed projects such as the set-up of a mobile library and the design of a play and recreation area in the pediatric waiting room.

The program promotes individual responsibility in the participants (self-care) and a sense of solidarity towards the community as the promoters perform their role, receive training and multiply the health message.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that volunteering not only provides a service to the community, but also giving and receiving help improves the physical and mental health of the participants (Onyx and Warburton 2003; Schwartz et al. 2003).

The accounts given by older adults at the interviews have shown that the activities carried out in the program help the participants undergo a healthy ageing process. Indeed, the work the participants do through training, creativity, games, the building of networks, solidarity and self-management contributes to optimizing their resources, exploring their abilities and developing new activities. In this way, the attitudes and the abilities of each participant are stimulated.

Volunteering offers the means to acquire social support and can be a gratifying task that creates meaning in old age (Au et al. 2015).

As stated by Van Ingen and Van Eijck (2009), volunteer work has robust connections with older adults' life satisfaction. Indeed, in the past few years volunteering has seen a dramatic increase among older adults, who thus devote their time to helping others (Montero García and Bedmar Moreno 2010).

The main purpose of the program was to promote older adults' involvement in the community. This can only be achieved in a context of reciprocity and equal dialogue that regards them as social actors and agents of change.

The group's work itself also allows the participants to make new social bonds that may help them foster their identities and healthy ageing. In addition, support networks are proposed, which operate as socio-sanitary resources that help promote health and prevent diseases.

The group has an intrinsic value, as it enhances bonds and feelings of affection among the members (Zarebski 2011). Along these lines, Cutler and Hendricks (2000) argue that volunteering gives aged people opportunities for compensation, affiliation, recognition and gratification, thus producing a protective effect that contributes to older adults' well-being.

The program offers different alternatives for older adults to take part in group activities that favor the development of solidarity, transcendence, training, self-care and care for others—

with the ultimate purpose of not being alone and continuing to improve their lives. One of the main benefits is the encounter with others. In addition, the diversification of support provided throughout the program allows the promoters to gain greater autonomy. This was highly valued by the older adults that took part in the interviews.

Studies have identified numerous benefits deriving from volunteer work, such as enhanced social bonds and diminished feelings of loneliness (Mullins and Mushel 1992), improved social functioning and functional autonomy (Yarmohammadian and Yazdkhasti 2010), and enhanced self-esteem and feelings of usefulness and satisfaction (Agulló et al. 2002).

The program operates as a facilitator of these new possibilities. Indeed, learning to adopt a flexible approach in the face of changes, the acceptance of changes brought about by older age, the possibility of creating and maintaining projects, as well as the possibility to question prejudices, are all ultimately aimed at developing different protective factors that favor healthy ageing.

Volunteering provides older adults with an increased ability to cope with the changes that occur in old age (Kelly et al. 1987).

This study shows the importance of adopting strategies for the beneficial use of leisure time among older adults through the design of volunteer programs. In this sense, it is essential to create and stimulate social spaces, and implement actions to cover the needs and demands of older adults in their leisure time.

The evidence in these studies suggests that involvement in volunteer work among older adults can be a relevant factor in successful ageing and that it can be positively associated with well-being (Schwingel et al. 2009).

For that reason, it is crucially important to open up participative spaces where older persons can meet with their peers and carry out significant activities and, thus, form a group of belonging where they can be understood and listened to, and provided with opportunities to occupy their leisure time.

The cases reviewed in this study show volunteer work, spaces of solidarity and helping others as valuable aspects of this program. They allow overcoming life crises and certain old age events by making the participants feel involved and productive, with the constant challenge of working creatively and transmitting their experiences to others. Volunteering and solidarity offer possibilities of change as they encourage older adults to step out of themselves, give themselves to others and value all that is gained in old age as opposed to what is lost. These are activities that enable the participants to fully realize their potential, in addition to favoring self-care, autonomy through the diversification of support and interests, psychological well-being and creativity.

Research studies have been conducted that show that older adults that engage in volunteer work report increased levels of well-being as compared to those that do not (Au et al. 2015; Dulin 2015; Post 2005; Tabassum et al. 2016; Windsor et al. 2008). In addition, they perceive themselves as functioning better in the cognitive, emotional and social areas (Shmortkin et al. 2003).

This evidences the importance of implementing actions to improve the quality of life of one of the most vulnerable groups in society, respecting their needs and wishes and encouraging the multiplication of similar spaces.

Volunteering undoubtedly offers numerous benefits for both the participants and society in general. For older adults, these benefits include improved levels of well-being (Dupuis and Smale, 1995), increased happiness (Dulin et al. 2012; Midlarsky and Kahana 2007; Wheeler et al. 1998) and better health (Greenfield and Marks 2004; Lum and Lightfoot 2005; Morrow-Howell et al. 2003; Musick and Wilson 2003; Musick et al. 1999; Thoits and Hewitt 2001).

In order to achieve such goal, it is important to put forward proposals jointly with older people, listen to their experiences, value the social and cultural capital they bring with them to each initiative and promote active ageing.

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# Leisure Space and Quality of Life. An Approach to Their Relationship: The Case of Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina

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**Abstract**

From a geographical point of view, the scientific approach to leisure space is still emerging in connection with its incorporation and significance within the range of values characteristic of postmodern society. In turn, evaluations on quality of life of the population have barely advanced with respect to leisure as to other traditional dimensions. In this sense, we find fertile grounds on which we can contribute to the construction of knowledge about the overall treatment of leisure space and quality of life.

For these reasons, this chapter presents the state of the art of the geographical study corresponding to leisure space and quality of life, seeking to investigate afterwards the possibilities of its overall application in the empirical field. To do so, bibliographical review and critical analysis of specialized literature were applied as methodology. Secondly, this chapter inquires on the territorial imbalances which can be perceived as the product of cartographic overlapping spaces characterized by holding a unique predisposition towards the functionality of leisure (public green areas and shopping streets) and levels of quality of life, at the same time relating to the rates of population growth. Mar del Plata was selected as a study area, a city located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The information employed came from secondary sources provided by the national census carried out in 2010 by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) as well as data provided by the municipality of the General Pueyrredon district.

## 13.1 Introduction

Although within the set of issues addressed by Geography, leisure concern is of recent introduction, it is possible to refer to a strengthened core of researchers engaged and worried about the study of the significance of leisure practices in relation to the territory.[1] By way of example, the growing theoretical and empirical approach to concepts such as touristification (Lanfant 1995 in Hiernaux 2000), aestheticization/thematization of space (Bertoncello and Iuso 2016) or commercial gentrification (del Romero Reanu and Martín 2015), i.e. a whole set of processes of geographi-

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[1]Santos (2000), Elissalde (2007) and Blanco (2007), among many other authors.

cal nature, serves to position leisure as a contemporary phenomenon that gradually seems to gain ground within the cities and, but of course at uneven pace, rural areas.

Once the existence of this kind of processes is recognized and accepted, what concerns this chapter is linking leisure with quality of life from a territorial point of view. To do this, we start by expressing that we are working with core concepts that are of a certain level of complexity, since around the notions of territory; leisure and quality of life are growing deep debates that allow ensuring that there is not a single theoretical approach to their definition.

Generally in assessments of quality of life in Argentina, leisure has not been mostly considered as a dimension of analysis. This situation contrasts with the estimates carried out in places such as the European Union, where recent surveys have already provided the hierarchy of independent domain to topics such as sports and cultural facilities, public space and green areas.

Moreover, the establishment of indicators relating to the well-being of the population has expressly focused on dimensions such as health, education, housing, environment and employment, though some socio-spatial indicators, able to allow an approximate reading to the territorial leisure space distribution, have been incorporated. In this sense, we find fertile ground on which to contribute to the construction of knowledge with respect to an overall treatment of leisure space and quality of life. For this reason, the first objective of this chapter is to present the state of the art of the geographical study corresponding to both concepts, attempting to investigate afterwards their possibilities for application in the empirical field. To do so, bibliographical review and critical analysis of specialized literature will be applied as methodology.

The needs or requirements in the field of leisure and recreation vary according to socio-demographic variables such as age and socio-economic level and, at the same time, quality of life conditions and is conditioned by the socio-demographic dynamics of places. Therefore, a second objective will inquire on the territorial imbalances that are evident in a particular area based on the

overlay mapping of types of leisure spaces and levels of quality of life, whereas at the same time the evolution of the rhythms of growth of the population will be considered. To this purpose, the city of Mar del Plata, a Aglomeración de Tamaño Intermedio Grande[2] (ATIG) (Velázquez 2008) has been selected as the area of study, which is located in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina and which, according to the census records carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) by the year 2010, congregated a total of 614,350 inhabitants.

The empirical study must be taken into account as the first step established towards a greater target, which is more related to the knowledge about leisure spaces contained in the city of Mar del Plata. In this sense, we start by analyzing the territorial distribution that some sites of the city acquire, being characterized by having a predisposition that is exclusive to the functionality of leisure, with the intention, in turn, to embrace both the Recreational Resources of a Natural Base as well as those Socially Constructed (Velázquez and Celemín 2013), more precisely public green spaces (parks and squares) and shopping streets.

This chapter is divided into six sections. In order to meet the first objective, literature review and documents analysis are carried out, thus attaining the construction of three different sections, where we proceed to: (1) highlight leisure as an object of study of Geography, (2) briefly introduce the guidelines linked to the concept of quality of life, and (3) join previous discussions from the reflection on the approach to leisure that is applied on the quality of life assessments in Argentina. To achieve the second objective, a quantitative methodology is employed, held on the use of secondary data from the 2010 Census, and information provided by the municipality of General Pueyrredón (the district to which Mar del Plata belongs) referred to the location of public green spaces and shopping streets. All this information has been systematized and opera-

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[2]It means Great Intermediate Size Agglomerate, urban areas comprising between 400.000 and 999.999 inhabitants (Vapñarsky and Gorojosky 1990 in Velázquez 2008).

tionalized in a free access and open source GIS environment (QGis), allowing the generation of thematic cartography. In this sense, the sections that remain are based on: (4) briefly characterizing the city of Mar del Plata as a notable case study in host location of practices of leisure at the national level, (5) detailing the techniques used for synthesis thematic mapping, and (6) specifically referring to the results achieved and provide an interpretation on the matter. Finally, we conclude with a series of end reflections and questions that encourage the continuity of this line of research.

## 13.2 Leisure and the Importance of Its Spatial Dimension

During the last decades, leisure has been installed as a field of innovative and multidisciplinary knowledge, as it refers to a concept in process of resignification (Pascucci 2012).

If the analysis of this term in historical perspective is recovered, one gets to the reflection about the existence of this social practice in each time and space where a group of people ever established. By way of example, we can firstly recall the period of classical Greece, where leisure was expressed in terms of ideals, i.e. a time of reflection and development of intellectual abilities only accessed by elites or free men (Gerlero 2005). Secondly, inside industrial capitalism, the use of this concept was assimilated with an immoral human condition, supposedly laziness and unproductivity (Elizalde 2010), and generated by the centrality granted to occupation in everyday life, and the consequent immersion of its original meaning with the developing notions of free time and recreation. However, despite this passage from a positive into a negative conception, it is well worth mentioning that, from this moment on, "leisure is no longer, as before, a privilege of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie" (Sue 1982: 35), but a mostly widespread social practice.

In this way, reassessment of leisure comes from the post-Fordist period, when such practices were recognized as constituents of a broad concept of health aimed at the satisfaction of post-material needs (Caldwell and Smith 1988). However, the duality between conceiving it as mere consumption activity or as a holistic experience that includes physical, emotional and mental persists in current capitalism (Gerlero 2005; Cuenca Cabeza 2010). Nevertheless, and as it was already mentioned, this discussion is something relatively recent, since temporality and spatiality not intended for work has been undervalued by academia and barely explored from a scientific point of view for being (dis)qualified as trivial, frivolous or irrelevant matter (Hiernaux 2000; Gerlero 2005; Elizalde 2010; Azevedo Schirm Faria and Gomes 2013).

Although the interpretation of different definitions of leisure allow its appreciation as "a contribution and a vehicle for the improvement of the quality of life" (Pascucci 2012: 39), and has even been pointed out as its essence, since you enter in a positive, desirable and valued state of mind and, thus, conducive to happiness (Neulinger 1981 in Pascucci 2012), there is an important cluster of assertions which express different features of the concept. Among them, Gómez (1987) describes leisure as a growing phenomenon that includes not only the idea of tourism but also various other forms of use of free time; Hiernaux (2000) refers to a mode of organized use of free time that strengthens its presence in everyday life; Gomes (2004 and 2007), summarized by Elizalde (2010), conceives it as a social practice composed by four elements: (1) a time lived at the present time, (2) an appropriate space, (3) a cultural demonstration and (4) an attitude based on playfulness. Finally, Pascucci (2012) adds that it is a vital right and necessity related to desire, freedom of choice, motivation and enjoyment, reasons why it begins to be assumed as a responsibility of the public authority (Müller 2002) for "the achievement of complete human development" (Tonon and Rodríguez de la Vega 2016: 11).

Nonetheless, despite the fact that leisure is emerging within the set of valuations of the subjects, its incorporation in everyday life is a gradual process, which permeates with uneven pace to all social sectors. Taking this into account, it is understood that the upper-income groups can

more easily challenge the centrality of work in contemporary life, and undertake practices of leisure most frequently, which, in turn, are transformed into objects of desire for the rest of the society (García Ballesteros 1998). In this sense, it is worth recovering Hiernaux (2000) reflection, who specified that "the behavior of the upper classes have a decisive weight in the formation of the behaviors of other groups" (2000: 100).

What was stated in the previous paragraph leads to support the relationship between consumption and leisure (Karsten et al. 2015), since it cannot be ignored that leisure has also joined the logic of capitalism in the sector of tertiary activities (Egea Fernández 1993), or that part of it has been in the hands of the market and generated new forms of alienation (Elizalde 2010). This displays the most perverse side of the affair, which claims to understand that the growth of leisure also meets the structural need for a system that imposes "Rest to continue producing and have time for consumption" (Álvarez Sousa 1994: 40 in Gerlero 2005). On this basis, the purpose of leisure consumption transcends the objective of satisfying a need and reaches a symbolic value of social representation or social integration, for medium and low income sectors (Rosake and Ercolani 2014). Up to here the reflection about what Cuenca Cabeza (2006) designates as the negative directionality of leisure, understanding it as the possibility to be achieved as practices or experiences harmful to the individual or society. However, we want to address at leisure from its positive directionality, i.e. its ability to become reference of human development and contribute to the quality of life.

Apart from the characterization developed so far, it is also necessary to consider the contributions of those who conceive leisure close to the tourism concept. This is due to the adoption of a humanistic approach that assumes tourism as experience and not only as an economic activity. In this sense, not a few authors[3] relativize the basic elements present in the classical definitions of tourism proposed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), as for example the fact of having to spend the night outside the area of habitual residence. In this regard, Azevedo Schirm Faria and Gomes (2013) recovered the thoughts of Lacerda (2007) and Souza (2011) to highlight the possibility of understanding tourism as a practice of leisure which must not necessarily be carried out in a distant place, but can also occur within the space of daily attendance from actions such as (re)knowledging of the local space and raising awareness about the milestones or heritage values present in the subjects' city of residence and their areas of influence. In this way, the proximity between tourism and leisure develops from the activation of sensations traditionally linked with the tourist experience but in the everyday living space, implying strangeness, discovery, contemplation and recreation (Gastal and Moesch 2007 in Azevedo Schirm Faria and Gomes 2013).

Although Bertoncello (2006) limited his analysis of the complexity of the contemporary tourist map to the case of Argentina, one could well state that the set of factors which he mentions refer to processes that go beyond the national level and relate to what has happened in Latin America. In this regard, issues such as the greater labor flexibility that afflicts the population since the 1990s, the prominent place given to recreational activities driven by the arrival of large companies and tourist proposals linked to local development, coupled with the trend towards the cultural and the alternative, have caused the fragmentation of leisure time and altered the classical practice of the summer resort linked to the concept of annual vacation. As a result, Bertoncello (2006) notes that the territory has all through been transformed into potential leisure space, and exemplifies this process referring to the multiplication of tourist destinations in Argentina, which could be extended to a global scale.

In this way we approach the debate on the geographic or spatial dimension of leisure, noticing in the first instance the complexity that covers this subject in Latin America as a result of the coexistence of contradictory realities. By the one hand, "there is the proliferation of new parks, gardens, pedestrian and transit corridors not

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[3]Lacerda (2007), Souza (2011), Azevedo Schirm Faria and Gomes (2013).

properly planned, which seem rather forced spaces belonging to another urban intervention and not to what the society of the sector in question demands" (Rendón Gutiérrez 2010: 12), and by the other hand, situations of abandonment, forgetting and neglect are demonstrated in pre-existing spaces of public leisure. Because of the above mentioned, it is argued that the revaluation of leisure is produced mainly in discursive or theoretical terms; since, in some urban management policies, it is observed that there is still a lack of awareness of the social value that these places contain (Müller 2002).

In line with the issues raised by Müller (ibid.), within the claims made by Latin American society to their governments, access to leisure is often found in a position downgraded with respect to other domains that make up quality of life (mainly housing,[4] work, health and education). However, if the high rates of urbanization characteristic of this region are taken into account, access to leisure does not lose importance and emerges as a fundamental aspect to be considered in the management of cities. According to this scenario, it is highlighted that in certain territorial fragments at the local scale, or the lived space, an appreciation of leisure emerges, product of the existence of problems to access spaces for this purpose.

Inside the urban space, places that possess an innate predisposition to the functionality of leisure are found. Such is the case of the green public spaces (squares and parks) and certain commercial sites (customary streets downtown and large commercial centers), which are here mentioned because of its use in the empirical study that is presented in the following pages.

It is interesting to think in public green spaces as urban areas where one can better territorialize the leisure that García Ballesteros (2001) has qualified as "constructive", i.e. not dependent of consumption and prone to relaxation, sociability

and personal development based in the possibility of putting into practice sports or artistic talents (biking, skate boarding, skating, painting, taking pictures). In this way, it is understood that, subject to a rightful land distribution, "the more green spaces in the city, the greater the quality of urban life" (Rendón Gutiérrez 2010: 12), since, in addition, they provide balance to some of the aggressive components that define the urban space, including noise and visual pollution (Gómez Lopera 2005). For these reasons, the European Union considers green spaces as one of their main indicators of urban sustainability, highlighting a minimum acceptable value of 9 m$^2$ of green area per capita, along with other international agencies such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

As regards commercial spaces, while in the first instance they direct to the idea of alienated and consumerist leisure (Elizalde 2010), their consideration in this study lies in their playful, recreational and amusement functions. It should be recognized that, today more than ever, to stroll along central streets and malls is one of the favorite pastimes of the urban population, reason why García Ballesteros (2001) emphasizes the need to differentiate the expression "going shopping" from "shopping", while the latter refers to a duty that is not reasonably accepted as part of their leisure time. However, this doesn't mean that after that the author confirms "the symbiosis between going shopping and shopping is growing" (2001: 269), since we are passing a period of great interdependence between the time devoted to duties or obligations, and the time for leisure. In relation to this last point, Geography demands having in mind that there is also a territorial arrangement for this to be so, since throughout time many customary commercial areas have acquired new structures that involve attractiveness and drive displacements with purposes of leisure (shopping malls, hypermarkets).

Beyond these spaces that predispose to universal leisure, the geographic perspective can be expanded if the production of culture is taken as a constituent element of the definition of leisure, without leaving it restricted only to passive experiences (Gomes et al. 2010 in Azevedo Schirm

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[4]Despite this comparison, the author underlines the value of housing as one of nowadays main leisure environments, due to the fact that it is there that most of the free time is spent. Even more, if you consider the Latin American reality, since today families do not have the streets of the city to take advantage as a space for leisure because they offer danger and violence.

Faria and Gomes 2013). With this consideration, the aim is to highlight that establishments such as cultural centers, district clubs, schools of dance and music, and theatres, must also be presumed as spaces of leisure and, therefore, analyzed in pursuit of the scope of territorial distributions in line with the needs of the population. In addition, we must be able to understand that work and leisure activities not always oppose, since, as Elizalde discloses (2010) when criticizing the classic contribution of Dumazedier (1973), "(…) what happens if at work, for example, moments and spaces of leisure are generated, therefore incorporating a pleasant feeling of being at a chosen time?" (2010: 7). Evidently, such actions aiming at the improvement of quality of life turn the approach to leisure space more complex, as it overlaps with the workspace of other subjects. Thinking about carrying out any type of tourist excursion (for example to a vineyard, a theme or industrial park) serves as example to support this idea. The truth is, as García Ballesteros says (2001), the heterogeneity and dynamism that characterizes the social space of consumption currently makes territorial interpretation more difficult.

Finally, from the viewpoint of Geography, we can contribute to knowledge starting from the problematization of the idea commonly extended about leisure as "a time/space selected and freely chosen" (Elizalde 2010: 10), since the geographical space, through its load of materiality and symbology, participates in these decisions as determinant of everyday evolution (Santos 2000). In this sense, and as Müller announces: "the question of space greatly influences the attitude that people adopt against its leisure experience" (2002: 1). In-depth knowledge about territory can be helpful to understand if its structure and operation favor the development of a leisure space that really contributes to quality of life, i.e., to the release or dignity of persons, or if otherwise it reinforces the social inequalities that characterize urban spaces today.

## 13.3 Quality of Life

Quality of life in the words of Casas (1996), cited by Tonon (2007), is defined as:

perceptions, aspirations, needs, gratifications and social representations that members of every social group experience in relation to their environment and the social dynamics in which they are immersed, including the services they are offered and the social interventions for which they are eligible and which come from social policies. (2007: 143)

Quality of life is a theoretical category that arises in the second half of the twentieth century, and that is still controversial about its meaning and content (Tonon and Rodriguez de la Vega 2016; Pacione 2003; Schalock and Verdugo Alonso 2009; Veenhoven 2000).

Sirgy et al. (2006) developed a comprehensive publication where they discuss the past, present and future of quality of life on a global scale.

It is a concept that involves the experiences of the subjects in their everyday environment, their possibility of access to goods and services, and the skills they have to make use of the existing proposals on their territory, a notion tied to the social and cultural capital of the subjects. At the same time, Sen (1998) argues that

since we not only value well and satisfactorily living, but we also appreciate having control over our own lives, quality of life has to be judged not only by the way in which we end up living, but also for substantial alternatives that we have. (1998: 2)

Quality of life is a concept that reacts to consumption, standard of living and environmental deterioration. It categorizes the criterion of quality against quantity, in such sense, "it is a social and historical construction and at the same time behaves as a spatial dimension" (Feu 2005). While it has a clear referent, i.e., human needs in all its dimensions, the standard of living is limited to a quantitative abstraction whose sole purpose seems to be "being above".

Within specialized literature we often found at least two streams of authors that define quality of life from opposite ends (Leva 2005; Cummins 1998; Somarriba Arechavala and Zarzosa Espina 2016; Diener and Suh 1997).

A first group (…) adheres to a quantifiable, measurable, objective vision. They investigate a wide range of goods and services in the external environment of people, which should potentially be available to individuals to satisfy their tangible and intangible needs. The second group defends a qualitative, non-measurable and subjective position.

> They emphasize the internal environment of people, concluding in exclusively perceptive happy or unhappy findings according to different dimensions of life, in general, and to goods and services, in particular. (Leva 2005: 14)

Although the objective questions are interpreted as a search for a set of goods and services provided by the built environment (housing, education, health and work), quality of life should also include the estimation and understanding of individuals and societies; here is where the subjective nature of the concept appears, a question that is not addressed in this work but must surely be taken into consideration.

Among Argentine geographers that have devoted to the study of quality of life, one of the main referents is Velázquez, who argues that quality of life

> is a measure of achievement with respect to an optimal established level, taking into account socio-economic and environmental dimensions that are dependent on the scale of values prevailing in its society and which vary depending on the expectations of historical progress. (2001: 164)

When disentangling the components that make up this conceptualization, we can get to understand the reason for its recurrent inclusion in most of the *papers* reviewed, since this definition encompasses the main ideas that make up quality of life from the geographic discipline.

Firstly, Velázquez presents quality of life as a measure of achievement, assuming the evaluative nature of the concept (Lucero et al. 2008) and its difference from the notion of life condition, which refers to a descriptive approach, despite the fact that the persistence of synonymic treatment in certain everyday situations or in political and journalistic discourse continues. Secondly, the author says that quality of life is made up of socio-economic and environmental dimensions, also called domains, a fact that guarantees its status as a multidisciplinary study.

In its relationship with leisure, the contributions of Pascucci (2012) and Gómez Lopera (2005) must be highlighted. From positive psychology, the first author adheres to the idea of quality of life as the state of the subject that results from putting optimal experiences in oper-

ation, or allowing the development of personal skills and practices which radiate satisfaction, self-esteem and happiness. In this way, to have a good quality of life depends on the frequency with which people perform their most desired actions, within which are those accomplished during their leisure time. From architecture, Gómez Lopera (ibid.) notes that quality of life is a concept that "refers to an assessment of experience that subjects have of their own lives" (2005: 418).

## 13.4 Deciphering Leisure Inside the Argentine Indices of Quality of Life

The general development of the indices of quality of life shows the incorporation of new dimensions beyond the usual economic, educational and health related concerns. For example, from the 1970s and in line with the growing importance of ecological issues, different indicators that reflect the environmental context from the perception of individuals (subjective indicator) or from information provided by governmental agencies (objective indicators) have been incorporated (Celemín and Velázquez 2011).

In Argentina, numerous geographers have advanced with respect to the construction of urban and rural scale indices of quality of life (Velázquez 2001, 2008, 2016; Lucero et al. 2005, 2008, 2016; Celemín 2009; Mikkelsen 2007, 2016, among others), many of them demonstrating that the ranges of the data obtained in the elaborated indices show more heterogeneity within the cities, generating undisputed fragments of differentiation.

As has been announced in Velázquez et al. (2013), "Geography, quality of life and territorial fragmentation in Argentina" (Velázquez 2001) was one of the first books dealing with the problem of quality of life with a geographic spirit, comprehensively and at the national level. Using data from the national censuses of 1980 and 1991 at the departmental level, i.e. the third-order political and administrative scale in Argentina, his work has included the indicator *Holiday and*

*weekend housing* within the environmental dimension which, as the author highlights, is taken as a measure that indirectly refers to the degree of tourists attraction exerted by the departments.

> While it is difficult to generalize situations, a high proportion of this type of housing implies the existence of positive elements with respect to the morphology of the landscape, mild climate and other resources that set up its tourist potential. (Velázquez 2001: 181)

Later this methodology has been replicated in Velázquez (2008), updated to the 2001 census.

At the same time, the use of this indicator has been common in other geographic studies for minor scales, but whose spatial analysis units were also the provinces, departments, or urban areas. While this has allowed for an approximate knowledge of the territorial distribution of the places where tourist entertainment converges, it is well worth noting that the use of indicators relating to the leisure activities that can be performed on a daily basis or several times a week in the living spaces of subjects were left out of the analysis. No doubt this situation was due to the lack of statistical information on these aspects.

However, once this problem is assimilated, further research indicates that, through subjective evaluation criteria related to the search for information provided by municipalities, the use of satellite images and direct field observation, in recent years the application of indicators that guide in favor of a territorial interpretation of leisure has increased, even though its location within the environmental domain persists and it does not appear as an independent dimension of analysis. In this regard, in Velázquez et al. (2014), the existence of *Recreational Resources of Natural Base (RRBN)* and *Recreational Resources Socially Constructed (RRSC)* are proposed as variables of the respective life quality index to the 2010 census. While the first category includes beaches, hot springs, snow used in recreational activities, water bodies and flows, and green spaces; the second distinguishes urban heritage, cultural, sporting and commercial or leisure centers.

In terms of the quality of life indices applied to the city of Mar del Plata, the book about Territory and Quality of Life directed by Lucero et al. (2008) incorporated the *Surface in square meters of green space per inhabitant* indicator in one of its chapters and, like at the national level, within the environmental dimension. For each census fraction[5] that make up the city, Lucero et al. (2008) relate the total number of residents to the area of green spaces such as squares, beaches,[6] seaside walks and forest reserves. As a result, and out of the data from the 2001 census, they obtain an average of 14.85 $m^2$ of public green space per inhabitant, a value significantly higher than the 9 $m^2$ recommended by the World Health Organization. Despite this fact, they emphasize that the territorial distribution towards the interior of the city is heterogeneous: coastal census fractions where spacious squares (4 acres) are located in the central area, and those census fractions within garden neighborhoods or forest reserves, coinciding with the more favorable situations. However, in this case, the analysis was limited to a narrated description of the indicator, regardless of its cartographic expression. As a product of their inclusion in the environmental dimension, the observations of the authors point to the importance of these spaces for urban sustainability rather than to their role as leisure spaces.

Nevertheless, in another chapter of the work above mentioned, Rivière (2008) studied the territorial distribution of household equipment related to the use of leisure time, using the same sources of data, specifically *Television (cable and satellite) and VCR property*. This work provides an interesting approach to what can be defined as Geography of stationary domestic leisure, where it is revealed that, despite the existence of a powerful coverage, the highest percentages of ownership of these objects match areas that register the

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[5]Territorial unit of census analysis.

[6]While at first glance the consideration and treatment of the beach as a public green space becomes open to criticism, because it does not fit within a clear definition, its inclusion must be understood taking into account the place where the city of Mar del Plata is located (seaside city) and the recreational use that the population makes of it.

better standards of living. At the same time, in the case of the availability of VCRs, the repetition of the pattern of spatial distribution characteristic of the city of Mar del Plata is easily verified through cartography, where indicator values decrease gradually as concentric rings from the center to the periphery.

At the local level, the study of Celemín (2009) must also be highlighted, who, through the elaboration of two indices, one of a socio-economic nature and the other of an environmental quality, he applies the spatial autocorrelation technique to establish the degree of association between the two systems of evaluation. In this way, he obtained that

> the more traditional sectors of the city of Mar del Plata, which recorded a good socio-economic status, have a greater ability to attain a healthy environment, i.e. away from factories, with abundant green spaces, adjacent to points of scenic attraction, among other variables. (Celemín 2009: 4)

Both public and private green spaces are mapped, and he warns about the difference in maintenance among those which form part of the traditional tourist circuits and those which do not. In turn, he includes the *Surface in square meters of Empty Urban Spaces per capita* variable, although from a negative perspective since, because of prioritizing the environmental vision, he refers more to the potential use of urban gaps as clandestine dumps than to its possibility to be used and adapted to the leisure needs of the population.

## 13.5 The City of Mar del Plata: A Brief Introduction

The origins of the "tourist" town of Mar del Plata (Fig. 6.1) paradoxically relates to the installation of the Beef Salting Industry, which determined the start of a slow but persistent change in the appearance of the region, since around it the first houses began to settle, thus giving birth to a urban nucleus. While the salting project did not obtain the expected success; "its consequence was a significant numerical increase of the inhabitants of the region" (Cacopardo 1997: 26). It was Patricio

Peralta Ramos who foresaw a profitable alternative with respect to the lands acquired from the failed salting venture, so he subdivided them into smaller parcels and planned the establishment of a town whose official foundation date was February 10th, 1874. Thus, it was the birth of a city on private lands, where the installation of the salting and the port facilities were joined by other fundamental features like the railway, the rise of agro-export economy[7] and the incorporation of immigrants.

The beginning of 1880 was going to produce a change in the use of the territory, linked to

> the emergence of the new social practices of leisure in relation to the sea, overlapped with the rural character of the primitive people, develops the seaside villa, and Mar del Plata becomes one of the more dynamical development cities of the Buenos Aires province. (Cacopardo 1997: 26)

In this way, as it is described by Lucero (2004), between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the thirties of the twentieth century, Mar del Plata was born and grew in population, occupying both the coastal and the original rural territories, a settlement favored by key economic activities according to the seaside resort town and its urban externalities.

Mantobani (1997) points out that

> the emergence of the beach culture was the product of a process of transition, which generated profound changes in the organization of space and in society, from the primitive settlement dependent on agricultural activities to the high society town. (1997: 60)

The city was a "great national elite club" (Cacopardo 1997: 27), a promising virgin territory in the hands of a few owners closely linked to the power of the State; a mandatory tourist destination that served as a stage for consolidating the dominant groups of the time (Bertoncello 2006).

Towards the end of 1920, the *elite* began to share this space of holiday entertainment with other social groups to the extent that annual paid

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[7] To expand on these aspects, Brailovsky and Foguelman (1991), Rofman and Romero (1997) and Gejo and Liberali (2006) are recommended, among other authors.

**Fig. 6.1** The city of Mar del Plata in Argentina Republic (Source: elaboration of the authors)



holidays and tourism were recognized as the rights of all workers. In this way, Mar del Plata continued expanding its population base, more diversified now, increasing its surface and its height, due to the construction of high buildings. These socio-territorial transformations were causes and results of the phenomenon recognized as mass tourism, and the development of industrial activities. Thus, the early elitist Mar del Plata came to an end in the thirties of the twentieth century, now becoming "the national mass tourism of the beach and sun model" (Bertoncello 2006: 323), becoming more plural and heterogeneous. Separately, the town became

quickly a city suitable for the reproduction of surplus in services and, given their rapid growth, became an adequate urban framework to guide these surpluses towards the speculative investment in land and construction, a temporary labor force attraction sector, beginning to define the social division of the space. (Nuñez 1997: 95)

Once the role of Mar del Plata was nationally recognized and taken as a common territory of all Argentines at the local level, the popularity of the city persisted to the present day, although its future is strongly linked to the national political and economic issues, a consequence of its status as an internal tourist destination. For this reason, at pres-

ent the town is defined within the framework of the national urban system as an "*Aglomeración de Tamaño Intermedio Grande*"(ATIG) (Vapñarsky and Gorojosky 1990 in Velázquez 2008), occupied by 614,350 inhabitants (INDEC 2010, in Lucero et al. 2016), which is facing the vicissitudes associated, on the one hand, with the persistent tourism seasonality sustained in survival, by not always effective strategies, and in its unique identification to sea and beach resources, and on the other hand, with the regional context consisting of a whole set of towns demographically smaller, arising as more diverse or natural tourist options (Bertoncello 2006).

At the same time, and following the characterization of the tourism model of Mar del Plata by Barbini (2001), the city holds a strong territorial fragmentation. The type of accommodation used is the downtown apartment or houses located in proximity to the beach, either in property or rental, a fact that implies a high proportion of family and regular tourism to this destination, which in turn implies homogeneity of expectations (sunbathing during the day, going to the theatre or bingo at night, sightseeing the port area) and lower motivation to participation in new activities and attractions. As a result, there is a significant contrast between the eminently tourist coastline and its contiguous urban area, whose function is to serve as a space of residence for local people, the latter being a community that is surpassed when compared with tourists in terms of objects of study in the field of leisure and recreation.

## 13.6 Methodology

In order to provide a first empirical approach towards the difficulties about mismatches between leisure space and quality of life, we decided to overlap layers of georeferenced data in a geographic information system (GIS), a free software known as QGis. Within this GIS, we included a background map showing the distribution of the different quality of life levels of the population living in Mar del Plata at the time of the 2010 census.

While reviewing various scientific works we learn that the construction of quality of life indices[8] consists in the selection of a set of attributes (dimensions or domains) that are recognized as representative aspects of the level of well-being of the population. By applying multivariate analysis techniques, we constructed an index that summarizes the status of the indicators contained in, for example, education, sanitation, housing, work and environment dimensions, among other possibilities. Once the dimensions or domains to be used are established, and the variables selected, they are assigned or not weighting, this being a choice of the researcher or the working team.

Then, starting from the processing of the information, it is possible to design the original data matrix (MDO) which subsequently becomes an index data matrix (MDI), in order to establish the proportion of each indicator by selected spatial unit (radios, fractions, cities, provinces, countries). Finally such a matrix allows obtaining the ultimate index numbers by applying the corresponding formulas.[9]

In connection with the above mentioned, it must be highlighted that since 2004 the Group of Studies On Population and Territory (GESPyT), based at the National University of Mar del Plata, is developing a line of research devoted to the study of quality of life, starting from the development of indices for its measurement in the southeast of the province of Buenos Aires and in Mar del Plata, General Pueyrredon district (Lucero et al. 2005, 2008, 2016; Mikkelsen and Velázquez 2013).

The most recent application without weighting of the index for the city of Mar del Plata, using information from the latest national census carried out in 2010, was published in 2016. Dimensions recovered were: Education, Sanitation, Housing and Economic Activity. The Education dimension variable was called *highest achieved educational level*, and included the fol-

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[8] Palomino and López (2000); Velázquez (2001); Hagerty et al. (2001), Estes (2005), Mayoralas Fernández and Rojo Pérez (2005); Lucero et al. (2005, 2008 y 2016); Sirgy et al. (2006); Marans and Stimson (2011).

[9] Omega Score or Standard Deviation.

lowing indicators: percentage of population of 20–59 years that finished the secondary or *poli-modal*[10] level, and percentage of population of 26–59 years that finished the university level.

The Sanitation dimension retrieved two variables: *water connection within the dwelling*, analyzed by the percentage of population in households with water connection within the dwelling, and *connection to a sewer or septic tank and cesspit*, studied from the percentage of population in households with sewer connection or connection to septic tank and cesspit.

As for the Housing dimension, it contained the following variables: *overcrowding*, studied by the percentage of population in households without overcrowding (two or fewer persons); and *quality materials* (INMAT), through the percentage of the population in households with INMAT-1, namely resistant and solid materials on the floor and roof; with ceiling.

The Economic Activity dimension was finally recovered from the variable *condition of activity*, systematized through the employment rate, i.e. the ratio between the employed population and the population 14 years and over; and percentage of inactive heads of households over the age of 64.

Overlapped with the cartographic representation of the levels of quality of life of the population, there are two other layers of georeferenced information that denote the location of places that, as was previously mentioned, maintain a high predisposition to the expenditure of leisure time in the city. With a view to include both Natural Base and Socially Constructed Recreational Resources (Velázquez and Celemín 2013) public green spaces, squares and parks, and shopping streets, were selected. In both cases, data came from secondary sources related to the listings provided by the Municipality of General Pueyrredon District.

In association with the public green spaces layer, the creation of *buffers* or influence zones was added, a technique provided by the GIS software that is useful to analyze the accessibility of

green spaces from the establishment of an area of coverage of 500 linear meters around each polygon without, in this case, discriminating according to the size of the squares or parks. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the limit to be used represents a decision of the investigator and that, on this occasion, such a measure is based on the choice to explore an intermediate value between the different distances that are usually taken, which vary between 300 m (English Nature) and 900 m (European Environment Agency) (Reyes Packe and Figueroa Aldunce 2010).

From the superposition of systematized information layers and the explanations given, the mapping result is shown below, accompanied by an interpretation which derives from the visual reading of the map and the recapitulation of some of the theoretical aspects that are discussed in the following pages.

## 13.7 Leisure Space and Quality of Life in Mar del Plata

Figure 6.2 is the result of the superposition of layers of information and the techniques detailed in the previous section. It exhibits some complexity and serves to reaffirm García Ballesteros quote (2001) about today's difficulty to interpret leisure from the territorial point of view. However, broadly speaking, the spatial configuration obtained reveals that the political and social advancements of the past years have failed to reverse or slow the pattern of the uneven territorial distribution characteristic of this city. In this sense, we can see the existence of two urban realities, on the one hand that of the East, corresponding to the coastal tourism sector with high and medium levels of quality of life, and on the other hand, across the West, that is, inside the city, an area that reveals lower levels of quality of life (Lucero et al. 2005).

Bearing in mind the resulting territorial arrangement index of quality of life, the inclusion of some of the main areas of urban leisure to the debate on local geography contributes to feed one of the objectives of this work. In this way, we find

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[10]High School level of education put into practice in Argentina between 1993 and 2009.

**Fig. 6.2** Public green spaces, commercial streets and quality of life in the city of Mar del Plata (Source: elaboration of the authors on the basis of Lucero et al. (2016), Population, Households and Housing Census 2010 (INDEC) and data of the municipality of General Pueyrredon district)

that, largely, the territorial distribution of the squares, parks and shopping streets responds to the above mentioned model (East–West), although it is more easily observed in the last two cases, given that squares expand towards the interior of the city, because of its status as a basic element of the neighborhoods identity and a generally considered matter in urban policies, although there is evidence that not all the neighborhoods of Mar del Plata have a public square.

In terms of commercial spaces, the map shows Mar del Plata as a polycentric city, an urban space composed by a group of eleven shopping streets that emerged spontaneously in response to the

needs of the resident population and, in some cases, of tourists; but above all in response to the general consumer society model. In this case, we perceive that its location produces a considerable fragmentation in the local territory because of its coincidence with high and media life quality areas.

On the other hand, the particular study of public green spaces in the city claim mentioning first of all the central position that, even nowadays, occupy the so called Seven Foundational Squares (Lamas 2014), dating from the original urban layout corresponding to the year 1874, and that integrate both a significant part of the *Central*

*Business District* (CBD) and the territory used by and for tourism. In comparison to the majority of the neighborhood squares which were established in later stages of urban expansion, this set of green areas also excels by its larger size (four city blocks), with the exception of the irregular shapes of the two squares that limit with the coast.

Due to their central location and closeness, the 500 m apart criterion, which is applied in this occasion, points to satisfactory accessibility to public green spaces in this part of town; a sensible attribute if we take into account that it also records the highest population density. At the same time, and as it was already implied, we detect that the location of these squares coincides with areas that reveal high and media assigned life quality indexes, i.e. areas having percentage values of university level population greater than 5%, population, in households with connection to water within housing above 98%, population in households without overcrowding exceeding 83%, and employment rate above 61%, among other indicators that make up the index.

However, an essential question to keep in mind is that, at the local level, the most aged demographic structures reside in this sector of ancient and traditional squares (Lucero et al. 2016) and that, according to the average annual growth rates for recent censuses, reductions in the number of inhabitants are recorded (Sagua and Sabuda 2015). In this sense, for the purpose of providing an interpretation traversed by the concepts of everyday and constructive leisure space, we might think that the resulting territorial configuration in this sector is a prime example of territorial imbalance, insofar as it is a zone that provides ample opportunities for the placing of sociability, artistic manifestations and outdoor sports, juxtaposed on a population group whose rate of growth diminishes and that, moreover, contains better living conditions compared to other territorial cuts from the city where this type of public spaces could be more necessary.

Possibly the last mentioned feature emphasizes inequality at the local level if we think that the possibilities of access to weekly/monthly attendance leisure spaces (for example large urban parks, lagoons in the surrounding rural space, little seaside towns belonging to the region), and more still to tourism, are strongly narrowed in ways that make up the living conditions of the population, such as the possession of material goods and the socio-cultural capital obtained, after having ensured the basic necessities included in the index. Examples of this can be to own a vehicle or to have access to a network of public transport.

As we move away from the center of the city, we can appreciate territorial fragments that stay out of the 500 m range from public green spaces. At this point there is a correlation with the lower population densities and, in the specific cases of the West and Southwest urban edges, quality of life acquires the most critical values presented by this study area. As a kind of representation, in such peripheral areas the quality of life index indicators returned values of population with university-level less than 0.5%, population in households with connection to water within housing around 60%, population in households without overcrowding not more than 45%, and although it may seem strange at first glance, exceeding 68% employment rate, i.e. some points above the areas where quality of life was registered as high and medium. But why might such a situation be? According to Lucero et al. (2016), two causes relate to this circumstance:

> first, the most aged population structure being in the areas with best general conditions of life (…) since the employment rate is described taking into account the total population of 14 years of age and older; and second, integrated measures not taking into account the quality of employment, so it could occur that a large proportion of the jobs that the inhabitants of areas with low and very low levels carry out (…) are located in the informal segment of the labor market, shielded by insufficiency in income levels, in stability and social protection. (Lucero et al. 2016: 7)

Unlike the central urban area, places that surround the official urban limit display increasing annual average growth rates, although at unequal rhythms according to sectors (Sagua and Sabuda 2015). As a result of this situation, another type of territorial imbalance is revealed, insofar as we observe contradictions between the demographic

growth associated with low levels of quality of life and the lesser possibilities of access to green public spaces, a situation that can get worst if the separation with regard to the main commercial streets is taken into account. However, the great amount of public green spaces located along the South extension of the city and the satisfactory coverage that is expressed through the *buffers* draw our attention, being one of the more recent populated areas.

## 13.8   Conclusion

This chapter focused our attention on the relationship between leisure space and quality of life from a territorial point of view. Even if, so far, in assessments of quality of life in Argentina, leisure has not been taken into account as a domain or dimension of independent analysis, it is within the environmental domain where we could find several socio-spatial indicators that allow for an approximate reading on territorial leisure space distribution at different scales. Holiday and weekend houses, the existence of Recreational Resources of Natural Base (RRNB) and Recreational Resources Socially Constructed (RRSC), surface in square meters of green spaces per inhabitant, television and VCR property (cable and satellite), and surface in square meters of empty urban space per capita, were indicators identified in this research that could be included in future quality of life indices. Therefore, we consider that there is a possibility of meeting these indicators in a future time, and probably others, to equate leisure space to level of education, health, housing, economic activity an even environment. In this way, we will contemplate that its inclusion among the indices of quality of life would represent a qualitative leap and, at the same time, an Act of Justice in relation to the aspects valued by contemporary society. However, the greater difficulty for a diachronic treatment of this dimension will be the access to the information since, for example in the case of the Argentine censuses, their variables tend to be modified with the passing of the time and, in those cases where a personal survey of the infor-

mation is carried out, that implies working in another type of scales.

In regards to the empirical study carried out, we were able to build a first map reflecting the existence of territorial imbalances between types of leisure spaces and levels of quality of life. Through it, we have observed that, in general terms, the best situations in education, health and housing correspond to an overlapping with the areas of influence of public green spaces and the greater proximity to the shopping streets. Otherwise, the most critical values of quality of life coincide with neighborhoods that, despite displaying lower demographic densities, contain huge areas outside the boundary established in this opportunity to analyze the access to public green spaces and, at the same time, don't have shopping streets. As an outcome of this evidence, we attained a first signal about the possible dissatisfactions that exist in relation to the accessibility to the spaces of leisure of the city of Mar del Plata. In this way, and to some extent, the achieved map is in itself a tool to testify the permanence of a duality based on urban materiality that characterizes this territory, where tourism undoubtedly becomes a force that encourages disparities since it demands the installation of localized areas for leisure activities in such a way that they complement the main tourist attraction of the city, namely the beach.

Finally, the work done has been useful to establish new questions linked to this line of research, which may help build a map of a more complex and close to reality leisure. While we assimilated a general and georeferenced look on the distribution of public green spaces in the city, a collection of qualitative knowledge that enable us to dig into issues like their differences in equipment and everyday uses is still missing, without forgetting aspects of social relevance such as, for example, the organized harmful leisure options spread out in the city, i.e. the areas of substance abuse, compulsive gambling or irrational consumption, among other possibilities. At the same time, and as stated, to include in the debate places where culture takes place and is enacted (neighborhood clubs, dance and music schools, theatres, shopping malls), in an attempt

to expand our knowledge about the choices that contribute to our personal development and quality of life from a geographic perspective.

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# Active Ageing in Spain: Leisure, Community Participation and Quality of Life

**14**

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## Abstract

As a multidimensional concept, active ageing is placed in relation to the most important domains of quality of later life, self-assessed by the individuals. It is well recognized in international research to have positive effects on personal wellbeing. From the point of view of an active living at an individual and ageing contexts, this paper aimed at analysing the profile of older-adults in relationship to their involvement in leisure and social and community participation activities, as factors that promote an active ageing to enhance quality of later life.

The data come from the ELES Pilot Study database, a representative sample of 1747 community-dwelling adults aged 50 years and over in Spain. Bivariate and multivariate statistical techniques were applied. Statistical analysis revealed a bipolar active living during the ageing process, consisting of a main group of older-adults with low overall level of performing activities and three different clusters of more active people. Factors associated with

active ageing behaviour are related to socio-demographic (relationship with the activity status, level of education) and social issues (frequency of face-to-face contact with social networks), as well as functioning capacity and accessibility to cultural, sports and recreational facilities. Satisfaction with leisure time and perception of problems in the neighbourhood completed the analysis on active ageing performance. Results will help in the design of initiatives to foster personal empowerment in social contexts.

## 14.1 Background

Active ageing has been a topic of interest for several decades (Avramov and Maskova 2003) and was adopted as an objective by the World Health Organization (WHO) at the end of the 1990s. The WHO strategy of active ageing encompasses three essential dimensions of physical, mental and social wellbeing that enhance health, social participation and security as cornerstones of older people's quality of life (WHO 2002), which a fourth dimension, the lifelong learning, has been added to (Faber 2015). The concept of active ageing has been used in scientific research and as a tool in the planning policies of international organizations (Zrinščak and Lawrence 2014),

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including the United Nations, WHO, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the European Union (de São José and Teixeira 2014) and NGOs and other societal bodies (Viriot and Moulaert 2014).

However active ageing as a concept is (i) polysemous in nature related to different theories (Petretto et al. 2016), (ii) constructed from multiple components (Fernández-Ballesteros 2008; Adams et al. 2011), (iii) correlated with other general concepts (wellbeing, quality of life) (Fernández-Ballesteros 2008; Paúl et al. 2012), (iv) wrapped in confusion and tensions with other concepts (Fernández-Ballesteros 2008; Paúl et al. 2012; Tesch-Römer and Wurm 2012; Lloyd et al. 2014; Bélanger et al. 2015; Foster and Walker 2013; Walker 2015), given the complexity and ductility, and barriers for its definition and use (Walker 2015), and (v) hardly and differently operationalized (Bélanger et al. 2015), depending on application in scientific, political or functional areas (Viriot and Moulaert 2014). A general trend among researchers is the recognition of a lack of consensus and clarity about the concept (de São José and Teixeira 2014; Zrinščak and Lawrence 2014; Walker 2015). Thus, to make sense of its formalization and evaluate its role in the public domain, Walker has highlighted that active ageing is a lifelong process, focused on the individuals' wellbeing and their environment (Neary et al. 2016; Walker 2006). This author concentrates especially on the elderly in order to empower them to enforce their rights and to point out their obligations. The social and regulatory system that incorporates any definition of active ageing must therefore be sensitive to the different societies and cultures.

Following the WHO statement, active ageing is built around two key aspects, a positive view of ageing (Gergen and Gergen 2001; Mackowicz and Wnek-Gozdek 2016), and a reference to participation in social, economic, cultural and spiritual activities (Bowling 2008; Stenner et al. 2011; Sanchis et al. 2014) and to a multidimensional array of factors (Tam 2013). However, literature reviews report close concepts affected by similar constraints in its operational design (Foster and Walker 2013; Paúl et al. 2012). Accordingly

health, as a necessary component for defining healthy ageing, is also an outstanding dimension of active ageing (Hank 2011a) and an underlying factor which affects the social participation of the individual as a social resource (Fernández-Ballesteros et al. 2013). Successful ageing relates to a system of relationships and activities inherited from adulthood to achieve life satisfaction in retirement, but there is no a clear definition due to confluence with other ageing concepts and components that are not essentially social (Bowling and Iliffe 2006; Fernández-Ballesteros 2008, 2010, 2011; Lee et al. 2011; Hank 2011a; Villar 2012; Cosco et al. 2014) and do not consider/include subjective criteria (Villar 2012). By introducing the economic value of time available for the elderly as a reference point that defines their activity, productive ageing (Giorgi 2006; Hank 2011b) can also clash with the concept of active ageing.

According to these considerations, how might active ageing be defined and what are its essential components? Based on systematic reviews, Adams et al. (2011) described seven essential domains: social, leisure, productive, physical, cultural, solitary and third-party support activities. These domains intertwine with methodological aspects, causes, effects and factors thus offering a complex image. Some authors focus on the value of heterogeneous, individual activities, such as physical activities (Winterbotham and Du Preez 2016), social activities and innovation (Liechty et al. 2012), volunteering (Godbout et al. 2012), social capital and the promotion of health (Koutsogeorgou et al. 2014), residential environments (Bowling and Stafford 2007; Michael et al. 2006; Annear et al. 2014; Aird and Buys 2015), or gardening (Hawkins et al. 2013; Wang and McMillan 2013). Other aspects also valued as effects, being among them, happiness and extraversion (Oerlemans et al. 2011; Cuenca et al. 2012), enjoyment (Hiscock 2007; Liechty et al. 2012) or relaxation (Hawkins et al. 2013), achieved when performing activities (Siegrist and Wahrendorf 2009; Stephens et al. 2015). The concept of active ageing is pervasive and has become part of diverse regulatory actions such as lifelong learning activities (Villar and Celdrán

2013; Boulton-Lewis and Buys 2015) and university programs (Fernández-Ballesteros et al. 2005; Roa 2012; Chen and Wang 2016; Mackowicz and Wnek-Gozdek 2016) or through the WHO Age-Friendly Cities project (Beard and Petitot 2010) to optimize health, participation, security and lifelong learning opportunities. Furthermore, the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIPAHA), as an initiative to meet the challenge of population ageing in Europe, has focused on empowering the elderly to become more active and improve their quality of life.

We will not provide comprehensive overview of the many components that normally are included in research on active ageing in this paper. However, in order to establish the objectives of this study basic aspects need to be considered. Firstly, there is uncertainty between components and factors of active ageing. This terminology lacks clarity and is used interchangeably, as well components are used as either dependent or independent variables (Fernández-Ballesteros et al. 2010). Secondly, there is confusion between ageing, as a process associated with a person's life course, and old age, as a structural situation affecting the population at a given time (Paúl et al. 2012). Thirdly, a controversy that has received little attention is that ageing is frequently presented as an individual process with a remarkable degree of 'inter-subject variability' (Fernández-Ballesteros et al. 2005). Moreover, when multidimensional components are analyzed (Bowling and Stafford 2007; Stenner et al. 2011), there is no enough discussion on the differences between subjective and objectives approaches. Lastly, longitudinal methodology has recently been deployed as a tool for monitoring changes and trends in performing activities during the life course (Adams et al. 2011; Pruchno et al. 2010) and their related causes (van Soest 2010), to overcome the cross-sectional analysis deficiencies (Perales et al. 2014; Hart 2016; Galenkamp et al. 2016). However, cross-sectional analysis is extensively used in connection with the increased availability of survey data.

This study aims to develop an analysis about active ageing of older Spanish people by focusing on leisure, social and community participation activities, as positive, socially and personally involved aspects. In doing so, active ageing is placed in relation to the most important domains of quality of later life self-assessed by the individuals (Fernández-Mayoralas et al. 2011) that are health, family and social networks, economic resources and leisure, as well as personal circumstances and residential environment (Rojo-Pérez et al. 2007). The theoretical basis underlying this study is the objective-subjective perspective followed in quality of life studies (Noll 2002). Other active components of individual's life are intertwined with other related concepts (healthy, productive, successful, …) and will not be considered in this article.

## 14.2   Material and Methods

### 14.2.1   Data Source

Data source come from the Ageing in Spain Longitudinal Study, Pilot Survey (ELES-PS, http://www.proyectoeles.es). This survey comprised a representative sample of community-dwelling people aged 50 years and older in Spain. The sample design is a stratified multistage cluster of first-stage units (municipalities and census tracts) by autonomous region and size of habitat, randomly selected proportional to its population aged 50 or older. Second-stage units (households) were randomly extracted from a database of households with telephones by census tract. For the final sampling unit an individual was also randomly identified in each household, with post-stratification by 6 and 10-year age groups from 50 to 90 years old. The survey included biological samples, anthropometry measures, performing tests and a questionnaire based on dimensions of ageing, including household, demographic and life course characteristics; wellbeing and quality of life; family and social networks and social participation in free time; physical health and healthy living habits; physical, emotional and cognitive functioning; support networks and use of health and social resources; residential environment; employment situation, economic resources and

standard of living; and values and attitudes. The information was collected in four phases: Telephone interview, visit by nurses, computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) and self-administered questionnaires. Sample size for each phase was respectively 1357, 1185, 1086 and 898 weighted subjects, an error of ±2.7%, 2.8%, 3.0% and 3.3%, respectively, and a confidence level of 95. Survey design, methodology and measures are detailed in another paper (Teófilo Rodríguez et al. 2011).

For this study, frequency of performing leisure, social and community participation activities (measured by number of days per month) was used as criterion variable. These activities were: (i) cultural (going to the cinema, theatre, exhibitions); (ii) educational pursuits (studying, doing courses, learning new things); (iii) social (going to the senior citizens centre, going out for lunch, getting together with friends, going to a party); (iv) going on excursions, travelling; (v) activities in the domestic environment (gardening, do-it-yourself, handicrafts, sewing, knitting, crocheting, etc.); (vi) activities in the neighbourhood (e.g.: walking, going to the park, to the sports centre or to the square, meeting neighbours, etc.); and (vii) participation in clubs or associations (e.g.: social, political, neighbourhood or community, sports or volunteering work).

The independent variables were selected according to the dimensions that influence leisure, social and community participation activities (Adams et al. 2011): (i) *socio-demographic characteristics* (sex, age, marital status, size of habitat, household economic perception, current activity status, level of education, social status and household size); (ii) *health and physical and cognitive functioning variables* (self-perception of health, number of illnesses, functional capacity, number of medicines taken, cognitive deterioration based on the Mini-Mental State Examination - MMSE); (iii) *emotional functioning* measured by depression scores based on the Depression scale of the Centre for Epidemiological Studies (CES-D10) (Robison et al. 2002), personal wellbeing based on the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience- SPANE, perception of control according to the Perceived Control Scale,

satisfaction with the way they use their free time following the unipolar structure of the Personal Wellbeing Index (Rojo-Pérez et al. 2012); (iv) *family and social context* (perceived social support according to the Duke-UNC Functional Social Support Questionnaire -DUFSS, frequency of contact with family members, loneliness according to the De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale, receiving support or care); and (v) *residential environment* (means of access to the senior citizens centre, to the cultural or sports centre and to the park or green areas, perception of problems in the neighbourhood, perception of obstacles to travelling by public transport, accessing the building and getting around their neighbourhood and, in the end, amenities in the building, dwelling and household). More information and the bibliographic references for the selected measures can be found on Teófilo Rodríguez et al. (2011).

## 14.3 Analysis

To meet the objectives, data analysis was carried out in several phases. To understand the underlying relationships of the dependent variables (frequency of leisure, social and community participation activities) and reduce their dimensionality, the Factor Analysis (FA) was applied using Principal Component method and rotation method by varimax with Kaiser normalization. Factor loadings were saved for use in subsequent analysis. Cluster Analysis (CA) was run under the non-hierarchical clustering procedure to identify homogeneous groups of individuals with similar patterns of leisure and social and community participation activities. The obtained clusters comprised the response variable used in this paper.

To fulfill the objective of examining relationships of active ageing with socio-demographic characteristics, health and physical functioning, cognitive and emotional functioning, family and social networks and support, and residential environment among the study population, a twin procedure was followed. The bivariate relationship between the dependent and the independent

variables was analyzed first. Secondly, to better assess participation in different leisure and associative activities, a Categorical Regression Analysis with Optimal Scaling (CatReg) was applied due to the categorical nature of the variables or their nonlinear relationship. CatReg extends the standard linear regression analysis by simultaneously scaling nominal, ordinal and numerical variables. This procedure quantifies variables by assigning numerical values to the categories, and the quantifications reflect the characteristics of the original categories. This technique treats quantified categorical variables in the same way as numerical, resulting in an optimal regression equation for the transformed variables (Meulman and Heiser 2010). The impact of each factor on the regression model must be interpreted according to its contribution to the regression equation, which is the product of its quantification (or optimally transformed values) by the beta coefficient of the factor.

To evaluate the most influential variables, a CatReg analysis was conducted for each of the selected ageing dimensions, using as independent variables those statistically significant derived of the bivariate procedure (p-value ≤ 0.05) and as a dependent variable the subject's profile according to participation in leisure, social and community activities, obtained through CA. This method helps control the effects of categories and variables in the regression model. The optimally transformed and significant resulting factors of each of these CatReg partial procedures were used in a final global CatReg model, presented in this paper. Thus independent variables used were: household economic perception, highest educational level achieved, relationship with current activity status, perception of general health status, functional capacity, depression, satisfaction with use of free time, frequency of face-to-face contact (number days/month) with friends in the last 12 months, means of access from their usual dwelling to the cultural activities and sports centre and to the park or green areas, perception of obstacles or barriers to travelling by public transport, perception of problems in their area of residence because of pollu-tion/dirtiness and the number of services and facilities in their dwelling.

## 14.4   Results

### 14.4.1 Classification of Criterion Variables

Through FA three main components were obtained explaining nearly 52% of the total cumulative variance after rotation. In the first factor, which retained 20% of the variance, there was a direct and positive correlation of the variables on "cultural, educational, travel-tourism activities", and it was labelled accordingly. The second factor, accounting for 16.6% of the variance, was related to "activities in the residential and social environment", and included social activities and hobbies or interests in the dwelling and the neighbourhood. The final factor accounting for 15% of the variance, covered active participation in any type of club/association and was named as "associative participation".

The classification of subjects in clusters according to their leisure, social and community participation activities, obtained by CA, is shown in Table 14.1, and the results are standardized (mean = 0, standard deviation = 1). The first cluster (14% of cases) grouped people who participated in educational, cultural and travel and tourism activities, above the overall average for the studied population, but below the average in performing other activities. The second cluster was composed of 31% of subjects participating in activities performed in their domestic environment and neighbourhood. Negative or below average values in educational, travel and associative activities indicate that these subjects took part less in these types of activities. The third group (5.1% of cases) was defined by the performing of all kinds of activities, especially those related to active participation in associations of any type such as volunteering, neighbourhood, community, sports associations, etc. The last group (half of the sample) was characterized by low levels of participation in all types of leisure and social activities.

**Table 14.1** Older-adults classification in clusters according to the frequency of performing leisure and community participation activities during the last 12 months

|  | Final clusters centres | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Principal Components | 1: Cultural, educational and travel-tourism activities | 2: Activities performed in the residential and social environment | 3: Associative participation | 4: Low level of participation in all types of activities |  |
| Cultural, educational, travel-tourism activities | 1.893 | −0.349 | 0.258 | −0.328 |  |
| Activities in the residential (household, neighbourhood) and social environment | −0.034 | 1.004 | 0.151 | −0.632 |  |
| Associative participation | −0.226 | −0.126 | 3.198 | −0.192 |  |
| Number of weighted cases in each cluster | | | | | |
| Total | 146 | 333 | 55 | 534 | 1068 |
| % | 13.7 | 31.2 | 5.1 | 50.0 | 100.0 |

Ninety-seven percent of original grouped cases were correctly classified according to Discriminant Analysis

The Discriminant Analysis technique was used to validate the individuals' classification, meaning that 97% of original grouped cases were correctly classified.

### 14.4.2 Characteristics of the Sample and Profiles of the Population by Activity Group

Table 14.2 shows the general characteristics of the sample as well as that of the study population according to their leisure, social and community participation activity profile.

Overall, the population sample is characterized by a slight predominance of women, with a mean age of 65 years old, living in urban areas and in households with an average size of 2.5 members. A balanced education by levels and a predominance of retired people and manual workers was observed. Physical, mental and emotional functioning showed positive ratings, and self-perceived health was good or very good. This population maintains a relatively high contact with family and social networks, especially with children and grandchildren, and reported low perception of loneliness, positive social support and high satisfaction with the use of free time, but lesser than satisfaction with life as a whole. The residential environment was characterized by a higher provision of amenities in the

household than in the dwelling and in the building. Less than two in ten people perceived barriers to accessibility and insecurity, as well as environmental pollution problems in residential settings.

In connection with socio-demographic features, two patterns can be found; on one side, clusters 1: learning and travelling and 3: associative participation, and on the other hand, clusters 2: activities in the residential and social environment and 4: low general activity. People in clusters 1 and 3 had a lower mean age, with the majority still in work (being individuals aged 50 and over), had higher social status and level of education, and lived in urban areas with a population of more than 100,000 inhabitants. The feature of economic activity of the population also highlights differences in clusters 2 and 4, with a predominance of retirees that included those people who prominently carried out activities in the residential and social environment, while the group with low general activity was dominated by those still in work.

In terms of health and physical and mental functioning, two groups according to their participation in activities were found. People who had poor health outcomes (perceived health status, higher number of illnesses or problems, less functional capacity) were classified in the cluster 4 characterized by being less active in general. In contrast, those who obtained better results in

**Table 14.2** Sample characteristics and clusters according to the leisure and community participation activities

| Variables and categories | % of each category in the variable. Mean in continuous variables | Clusters of individuals according to their participation in activities | | | | Test[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1: Cultural, educational and travel and tourism activities | 2: Activities performed in the residential and social environment | 3: Associative participation | 4: Low level of participation in all type of activities | |
| N (valid cases) | 1.068 | 146 | 333 | 55 | 534 | |
| % | 100,0 | 13,7 | 31,2 | 5,2 | 50,0 | |
| Socio-demographic features | | | | | | |
| Gender | | | | | | |
| Male | 45,2 | 13,5 | 32,5 | 6,8 | 47,2 | 6,149 ns |
| Female | 54,8 | 13,8 | 30,0 | 3,9 | 52,2 | |
| Age (years) | 65,3 | 62,8 | 66,3 | 64,1 | 65,5 | 4,284** |
| Age (groups) | | | | | | |
| 50–64 | 49,9 | 15,2 | 28,2 | 5,1 | 51,5 | 22,137*** |
| 65–74 | 27,3 | 15,5 | 32,6 | 7,9 | 44,0 | |
| 75 years old and more | 22,8 | 8,2 | 35,8 | 2,1 | 53,9 | |
| Marital status | | | | | | |
| Single | 5,5 | 18,6 | 28,8 | 1,7 | 50,8 | 14,695 ns |
| Married, living with a partner | 72,5 | 13,5 | 31,7 | 5,3 | 49,5 | |
| Widower/widow | 17,3 | 10,3 | 29,3 | 4,3 | 56,0 | |
| Divorced/separated | 4,7 | 24,0 | 32,0 | 10,0 | 34,0 | |
| Municipality size | | | | | | |
| Less than 10,000 inhab. | 23,7 | 11,5 | 32,4 | 5,5 | 50,6 | 29,521** |
| 10,001–50,000 | 23,8 | 8,7 | 36,2 | 4,7 | 50,4 | |
| 50,001–100,000 | 9,7 | 5,8 | 31,7 | 3,8 | 58,7 | |
| 100,001–500,000 | 24,7 | 18,2 | 27,3 | 5,7 | 48,9 | |
| 500,001 and more | 18,1 | 21,2 | 28,0 | 5,2 | 45,6 | |
| Self-perceived household economic status | 5,9 | 6,5 | 5,8 | 6,3 | 5,7 | 11,973*** |
| Relationship with current activity status | | | | | | |
| Working | 27,9 | 16,1 | 23,5 | 6,4 | 54,0 | 28,569*** |
| Retired | 42,5 | 13,9 | 37,9 | 5,5 | 42,7 | |
| Housework, care | 18,9 | 9,9 | 30,2 | 3,5 | 56,4 | |
| Inactives (unemployed, students, disabled, other) | 10,6 | 14,2 | 24,8 | 3,5 | 57,5 | |

**Table 14.2** (continued)

| Variables and categories | % of each category in the variable. Mean in continuous variables | Clusters of individuals according to their participation in activities | | | | Test[a] |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | 1: Cultural, educational and travel and tourism activities | 2: Activities performed in the residential and social environment | 3: Associative participation | 4: Low level of participation in all type of activities | |
| Level of education | | | | | | |
| Less than primary | 32,7 | 5,2 | 35,8 | 2,9 | 56,2 | 65,488*** |
| Primary | 23,5 | 10,4 | 31,1 | 6,0 | 52,6 | |
| Secondary | 21,0 | 17,9 | 28,1 | 6,3 | 47,8 | |
| University | 22,8 | 25,5 | 27,6 | 6,6 | 40,3 | |
| Social status | | | | | | |
| I–II: Managers | 27,3 | 21,2 | 29,4 | 7,8 | 41,6 | 31,501*** |
| III: Employees, professionals, supervisors | 27,7 | 17,1 | 30,2 | 5,0 | 47,7 | |
| IV: Manual workers | 35,5 | 9,1 | 32,9 | 4,5 | 53,5 | |
| V: Unskilled workers | 9,5 | 5,6 | 32,6 | 3,4 | 58,4 | |
| Household size (number of persons) | 2,5 | 2,5 | 2,5 | 2,6 | 2,6 | 1,099 ns |
| Health and functioning | | | | | | |
| Self perceived health status | | | | | | |
| Very bad | 0,4 | 0,0 | 25,0 | 0,0 | 75,0 | 39,107*** |
| Bad | 4,1 | 9,3 | 11,6 | 7,0 | 72,1 | |
| Fair | 31,5 | 8,3 | 30,0 | 4,3 | 57,5 | |
| Good | 54,3 | 16,7 | 35,2 | 4,8 | 43,3 | |
| Very good | 9,6 | 19,0 | 26,0 | 8,0 | 47,0 | |
| Number of diseases or health problems | 2,6 | 2,1 | 2,6 | 2,2 | 2,8 | 4,034** |
| Functional ability scale | 90,9 | 93,6 | 92,5 | 93,4 | 89,0 | 14,899*** |
| Number of different drugs consumed | 3,2 | 2,9 | 3,2 | 2,8 | 3,4 | 1,834 ns |
| Cognition: Folstein MMSE score | 28,1 | 28,9 | 28,1 | 28,4 | 27,9 | 6,75*** |
| Emotional functioning | | | | | | |
| Subjective wellbeing: SPANE scale (balance) | 12,7 | 13,4 | 13,8 | 15,0 | 11,7 | 9,695*** |
| Depression: CES-D10 | 2,0 | 1,5 | 1,9 | 1,0 | 2,4 | 7,515*** |

**Responsibility for unintended consequences**

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Levenson scale for positive events | 7,3 | 7,0 | 7,2 | 6,6 | 7,4 | 3,562* |
| Levenson scale for negative events | 9,9 | 10,0 | 9,7 | 9,1 | 10,0 | 2,175 ns |
| **Level of satisfaction with** | | | | | | |
| The way you use your free time | 70,4 | 75,1 | 74,7 | 80,2 | 65,4 | 26,824*** |
| Your life in general | 77,2 | 76,8 | 77,6 | 81,4 | 76,6 | 1,767 ns |
| **Family and social context** | | | | | | |
| Duke-UNC Functional Social Support: DUFSS | 42,5 | 43,0 | 42,7 | 44,4 | 42,0 | 1,143 ns |
| **Frequency of face-to-face contact (in no. days/month) in the last 12 months with** | | | | | | |
| Children | 16,9 | 14,9 | 17,8 | 14,8 | 17,0 | 1,854 ns |
| Children in law | 9,4 | 7,3 | 9,0 | 10,1 | 10,0 | 2,031 ns |
| Grandson/granddaughter | 15,5 | 12,1 | 15,5 | 17,9 | 16,0 | 2,634* |
| Other family | 10,9 | 10,7 | 11,2 | 13,6 | 10,5 | 1,217 ns |
| Friends | 10,6 | 10,0 | 11,9 | 14,2 | 9,5 | 5,328*** |
| Neighbours | 9,5 | 7,6 | 11,4 | 12,5 | 8,5 | 6,465*** |
| **De Jong-Gierveld loneliness scale** | | | | | | |
| Perceived loneliness | 2,2 | 1,9 | 2,2 | 1,8 | 2,4 | 3,254* |
| Support provided | 16,2 | 14,0 | 34,3 | 2,9 | 48,8 | 2,574 ns |
| **Residential environment** | | | | | | |
| **Means of access from their usual dwelling to the senior citizens club or centre** | | | | | | |
| Walking less than 15 min | 27,3 | 14,6 | 34,1 | 5,6 | 45,6 | 15,127 ns |
| Walking more than 15 min | 3,6 | 13,2 | 28,9 | 7,9 | 50,0 | |
| By public transport | 1,1 | 8,3 | 58,3 | 0,0 | 33,3 | |
| By taxi or private car | 1,9 | 10,0 | 30,0 | 15,0 | 45,0 | |
| Never go because there are no such services | 4,0 | 16,7 | 35,7 | 2,4 | 45,2 | |
| Never go due to other reasons | 62,1 | 13,0 | 28,9 | 4,9 | 53,1 | |

(continued)

**Table 14.2**  (continued)

| Variables and categories | % of each category in the variable. Mean in continuous variables | Clusters of individuals according to their participation in activities | | | | Test[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1: Cultural, educational and travel and tourism activities | 2: Activities performed in the residential and social environment | 3: Associative participation | 4: Low level of participation in all type of activities | |
| Means of access from their usual dwelling to the cultural activities or sports centre | | | | | | |
| Walking less than 15 min | 38,1 | 15,8 | 32,6 | 6,2 | 45,4 | 33,659** |
| Walking more than 15 min | 7,3 | 20,5 | 30,8 | 5,1 | 43,6 | |
| By public transport | 1,8 | 26,3 | 36,8 | 0,0 | 36,8 | |
| By taxi or private car | 6,7 | 18,3 | 35,2 | 9,9 | 36,6 | |
| Never go because there are no such services | 2,4 | 3,8 | 26,9 | 0,0 | 69,2 | |
| Never go due to other reasons | 43,6 | 9,9 | 29,6 | 4,1 | 56,4 | |
| Means of access from their usual dwelling to the park or green areas | | | | | | |
| Walking less than 15 min | 85,4 | 14,9 | 32,8 | 5,4 | 46,9 | 36,927*** |
| Walking more than 15 min | 4,6 | 6,1 | 30,6 | 2,0 | 61,2 | |
| By public transport | 0,1 | 0,0 | 100,0 | 0,0 | 0,0 | |
| By taxi or private car | 1,9 | 0,0 | 15,0 | 10,0 | 75,0 | |
| Never go because there are no such services | 1,6 | 0,0 | 35,3 | 0,0 | 64,7 | |
| Never go due to other reasons | 6,5 | 10,1 | 13,0 | 4,3 | 72,5 | |
| Perception of barriers or obstacles in the | | | | | | |
| Neighbourhood | 9,7 | 15,4 | 36,5 | 6,7 | 41,3 | 3,631 ns |
| Building access | 10,6 | 9,7 | 24,8 | 7,1 | 58,4 | 5,831 ns |
| Public transport | 9,8 | 5,8 | 24,0 | 1,0 | 69,2 | 19,866*** |
| Perception of problems in the area of residence because of pollution or dirt | 10,5 | 17,0 | 37,5 | 8,0 | 37,5 | 8,621* |
| Perception of problems in the area of residence because of insecurity or crime | 17,2 | 11,5 | 32,2 | 4,9 | 51,4 | 1,034 ns |
| Number of services and facilities in | | | | | | |
| Building | 2,1 | 2,4 | 2,1 | 2,3 | 2,0 | 2,838* |
| Dwelling | 4,9 | 5,1 | 4,9 | 5,0 | 4,9 | 1,714 ns |
| Household | 9,4 | 10,1 | 9,3 | 9,6 | 9,2 | 11,117*** |

Statistical significance: ns: $p > 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

[a]Chi-square distribution was used for categorical variables and F-Test for Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) in continuous variables

objective and subjective health indicators and took part in any type of activity grouped in the other three groups. The MMSE, as a cognitive level indicator, showed statistically significant differences between individuals with a better level, prevalent in clusters 1 (learning and travelling activities) and 3 (associative participation), and those with a lower score on the scale, mainly people with low general activity (cluster 4). Like the health indicators, the emotional functioning indicators showed two outlines, one whose population had a worse emotional functioning, predominant among the low activity performers (cluster 4), and the other with better emotional functioning, which corresponds to the remaining three clusters.

Regarding family and social context, three profiles of leisure, social and community participation were observed. The first were those who carried out all types of activities related to their residential and social environment (cluster 2) or who participated actively in associations (cluster 3) and maintained greater contact with their family and social networks. Secondly, those mainly involved in learning and travelling activities (cluster 1) had fewer relationships with their networks. Finally, those who reported low general activity (cluster 4) showed a closer relationship with their family network, essentially their grandchildren, less so with their friends and neighbours. Perceived loneliness was greater among people in this last group, and also among those who especially carried out activities related to the residential and social environment.

Two broadly contrasting profiles were found when analysing the residential environment, characterized by access to neighbourhood amenities (cultural or sports centres and parks or green areas). The population classified in the low activity group (cluster 4), which do not normally access these facilities for various reasons, differed to the rest of the activity groups that reported better accessibility in terms of access time. In this respect, both clusters 4 and 2, which include people that carry out activities related to the residential and social environment, comprise the population that most reported problems associated with public transport, pollution/dirtiness

and insecurity/crime. For their part, people in clusters 1 (learning and travelling) and 3 (associative participation) reported a higher number of services and facilities in their building and dwelling.

## 14.4.3 The Explaining Factors of the Active Ageing Behaviour

The dependent variable was the profile of subjects based on active participation, i.e. their behaviour in performing leisure, social and community participation activities. Figure 14.1 shows the transformation plot of dependent variable, which illustrates the relationship between the quantifications (vertical axis) and the original categories (horizontal axis) resulting from the selected optimal scaling level, in this case nominal. The quantifications are the values assigned to each category by the scaling algorithm. The active profile categories obtained the highest and positive quantification values, while low activity showed the negative values.

Of the thirteen optimally transformed and significant variables according to the partial CatReg models produced, the final CatReg procedure retained eight variables and generated an R-Square of 0.157, that is, almost 16% of the variance in the transformed clusters of people according to performed activities is explained by the regression. Table 14.3 shows the standardized regression coefficients as reflecting the importance of each factor. Thus, the highest absolute weight coefficients, that produce a bigger change in active behaviour among older adults, are the satisfaction with use of free time, followed by relationship with current activity status, level of education achieved, frequency of face-to-face contact with social networks, functional capacity, means of access from their usual dwelling to the cultural activities and sports centre and park or green areas and, perception of pollution or dirtiness in their locality.

The impact of each significant variable must be interpreted according to its contribution to the regression equation, which is the product of its

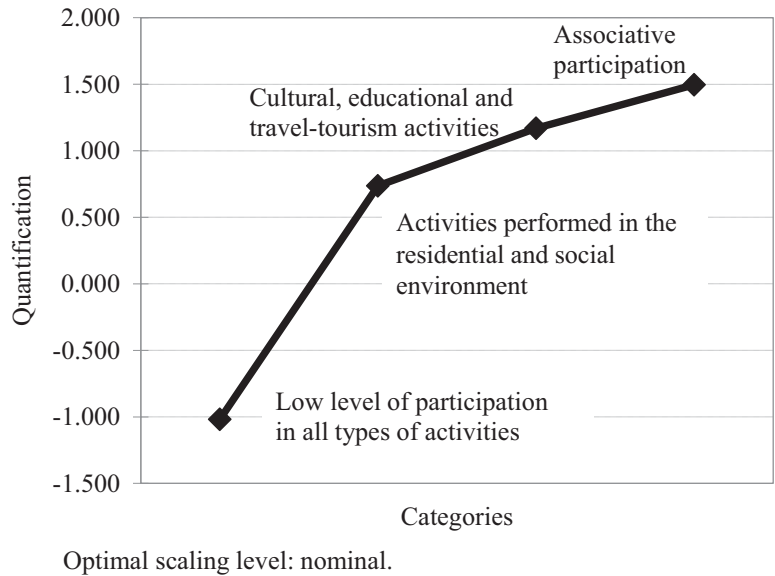**Fig. 14.1** Transformation plot of the dependent variable



Optimal scaling level: nominal.

**Table 14.3** Explaining factors of active ageing behaviour based on categorical regression analysis: model fit and coefficients

| Factors[a] | Standardized coefficients | | df | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Beta | Bootstrap (1000) estimate of Std. error | | | |
| Satisfaction with the way you use your free time | −.191 | .028 | 3 | 45.900 | .000 |
| Relationship with current activity status | 0.142 | 0.033 | 4 | 18.320 | 0.000 |
| Level of education | −0.132 | 0.048 | 4 | 7.567 | 0.000 |
| Frequency of face-to-face contact (in no. days/month) with friends in the last 12 months | −0.126 | 0.034 | 3 | 14.130 | 0.000 |
| Functional capacity | −0.121 | 0.035 | 2 | 11.664 | 0.000 |
| Means of access from their usual dwelling to the cultural activities or sports centre | 0.120 | 0.044 | 4 | 7.472 | 0.000 |
| Means of access from their usual dwelling to the park or green areas | 0.088 | 0.045 | 4 | 3.793 | 0.005 |
| Perception of problems in your area of residence because of pollution or dirt | 0.073 | 0.033 | 2 | 4.948 | 0.007 |

Model summary: Multiple R: 0.397; R Square: 0.157; Adjusted R Square 0.132; Sig: 0.000
[a]Significant resulting factors of each partial CatReg were used as independent variables in the final CatReg model

quantification (or optimally transformed values) by the factor's beta coefficient (see Table 14.4). Considering therefore the highest absolute weight determinant in the regression model, i.e. level of satisfaction with use of free time, this variable's highest original categories (8.0 or more) will be associated with a more active behaviour, while the lowest values with an use of free time charac-terized by low level of participation in leisure and associative activities. Similarly, higher input values in functional capacity (> 92.0) will produce a more active profile of subjects.

Results in Table 14.4 show predominantly retired people, those who do housework and care work and those with university or secondary education studies were, among the associated factors

**Table 14.4** The contribution of each category of explaining factors to the regression equation

| Variables and original categories | Contribution[a] | Variables and original categories (cont.) | Contribution[a] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship with current activity status. Optimal scaling level: nominal. Beta coefficient: 0.142 | | Level of satisfaction with the way you use your spare time. Optimal scaling level: ordinal. Beta coefficient: −0.191 | |
| Working | −0.175 | 1.0 | −1.097 |
| Inactivity (unemployed, students, disabled, other) | −0.133 | 2.0 | −0.670 |
| Housework, care | 0.019 | 3.0 | −0.410 |
| Retired | 0.147 | 4.0 | −0.306 |
| Level of education. Optimal scaling level: ordinal. Beta coefficient: −0.132 | | 5.0 | −0.225 |
| Less than primary studies | −0.167 | 6.0 | −0.125 |
| Primary studies | −0.044 | 7.0 | −0.007 |
| Secondary studies | 0.076 | 8.0 | 0.114 |
| University studies | 0.172 | 9.0 | 0.189 |
| | | 10.0 | 0.214 |
| Frequency of face-to-face contact (in no. days/month) with friends in the last 12 months. Optimal scaling level: ordinal. Beta coefficient: −0.126 | | Functional capacity. Optimal scaling level: ordinal. Beta coefficient: −0.121 | |
| 0.0–1.0 days/month | −0.078 | 33.0–65.0 | −0.383 |
| 2.0–7.0 | −0.066 | 66.0 | −0.382 |
| 8.0–13.0 | −0.059 | 67.0 | −0.380 |
| 14.0–19.0 | −0.022 | 68.0 | −0.377 |
| 20.0–27.0 | 0.054 | 69.0 | −0.372 |
| 28.0–31.0 | 0.284 | 70.0 | −0.365 |
| Means of access from their usual dwelling to the cultural activity or sports. Optimal scaling level: nominal. Beta coefficient: 0.120 | | 71.0 | −0.358 |
| Never go because there are no such services | −0.278 | 72.0 | −0.348 |
| Never go due to other reasons | −0.119 | 73.0 | −0.338 |
| Walking less than 15 min | 0.076 | 74.0 | −0.326 |
| Walking more than 15 min | 0.112 | 75.0 | −0.312 |
| By taxi or private car | 0.157 | 76.0 | −0.297 |
| By public transport | 0.297 | 77.0 | −0.281 |
| Means of access from their usual dwelling to the park or green areas. Optimal scaling level: nominal. Beta coefficient: 0.088 | | 78.0 | −0.263 |
| By taxi or private car | −0.284 | 79.0 | −0.244 |
| Never go because there are no such services | −0.248 | 80.0 | −0.224 |
| Walking more than 15 min | −0.211 | 81.0 | −0.202 |
| Never go due to other reasons | −0.191 | 82.0 | −0.180 |
| Walking less than 15 min | 0.035 | 83.0 | −0.158 |
| Perception of problems in your area of residence due to pollution. Optimal scaling level: nominal. Beta coefficient: 0.073 | | 84.0 | −0.137 |
| No | −0.025 | 85.0 | −0.117 |

(continued)

**Table 14.4** (continued)

| Variables and original categories | Contribution[a] | Variables and original categories (cont.) | Contribution[a] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 0.213 | 86.0 | −0.097 |
| | | 87.0 | −0.078 |
| | | 88.0 | −0.059 |
| | | 89.0 | −0.041 |
| | | 90.0 | −0.024 |
| | | 91.0 | −0.007 |
| | | 92.0 | 0.009 |
| | | 93.0 | 0.024 |
| | | 94.0 | 0.039 |
| | | 95.0 | 0.053 |
| | | 96.0 | 0.066 |

[a]Contribution to the regression equation = beta coefficient * quantification (Quantification is the value assigned to each category resulting from the selected optimal scaling level)

related to the activity status and education, respectively, the categories that better reflect more active ageing. Higher frequency of face-to-face contact with friends (> 20.0, i.e., daily or almost daily) as well as people with secondary and especially university studies will produce a more active profile of subjects. With regard to means of access to cultural or sports centres, subjects who reported not using the centres were those who were classified in the low activity profile, or alternately older adults classified with an active profile normally travel to these centres on foot or by public or private transport. Access to parks or green areas only affected the profile defined as 'any type of activity' when access was on foot or took less than 15 min. The least weight associated factor was perception of problems in the area of residence due to environmental pollution and dirtiness. Subjects who reported perceiving these types of problems were the most active.

## 14.5 Discussion

This research, drawn from the Ageing in Spain Longitudinal Study, Pilot Survey (ELES-PS), has revealed three types of active older adults according to leisure and social and community activities performed, and a majority remaining group with low general activity. As a result, a bipolar active ageing structure was identified with an equal number of subjects who demonstrated either

more or less involvement in carrying out these activities. In contrast to subjects with a low overall level of performing any activity, active individuals seem to be associated with higher functional capacity, personal motivation and purpose to carry out activities with physical, mental and emotional benefits of 'creativity, self-expression and altruism' (Adams et al. 2011). As indicated by Oerlemans et al. (2011), this active and positive behaviour is directly related to happiness, while activities that involve little motivation produce scant reward and do not facilitate emotional reciprocity (Siegrist and Wahrendorf 2009). The most representative example is that of those people who participate in social activities, including formal or informal voluntary work, as a preferred activity after retirement (European Commission 2011). Doing voluntary work declines as people age (Fernández-Ballesteros 2011) or their health worsens (Hank 2011b; Neary et al. 2016; Principi et al. 2016), with notable personal (Gasiorek and Giles 2013) and social effects (Haski-Leventhal 2009), but it fostered by individual resources (Galenkamp and Deeg 2016) and family environments (Pavelek 2013). Volunteering has been demonstrated to encourage other leisure activities (Galenkamp and Deeg 2016; Galenkamp et al. 2016), to help prevent social exclusion (Naegele and Schnabel 2010; Principi et al. 2016) or to stimulate quality of life (Pavelek 2013), and has been established as an expression of personal self-reinvention (Liechty

et al. 2012; Rossi et al. 2014), citizenship (Chen 2013) and processes of social identity construction (Rossi et al. 2014) and a component of public policies that foster them (Lie et al. 2009).

However, the four homogenous groups had different profiles of their active ageing behaviour. It is common to find variables that act as objective structural 'moderators' of a necessarily complex reality related to the physical context (Adams et al. 2011; Fernández-Ballesteros et al. 2010). In contrast, other variables, essentially subjective, reflect the capacities of the individual and are "a reliable overview of old people perspective of their own condition and that of the context in which they live" (Paúl et al. 2012, p. 9). Among the former, age and sex (Foster and Walker 2013; Golinowska et al. 2016; Liu and Lou 2016; Sabbath et al. 2016), education, (Golinowska et al. 2016; Liu and Lou 2016), physical functioning (Paúl et al. 2012), physical and mental health (An et al. 2013; de São José and Teixeira 2014; Neary et al. 2016) or economic conditions (Foster 2012; Gasiorek and Giles 2013; de São José and Teixeira 2014) are the most frequent and may sometimes be hidden when they interact each other. Community factors as social networks (An et al. 2013; Willie-Tyndale et al. 2016) and residential and social environments (Conde 2012; Aird and Buys 2015; Dury et al. 2016) also play an outstanding role in explaining elderly's active behaviours.

Age was not statistically significant in the regression model, but its effects could be retained in other variables as education level and current activity status. So, someone still working or with a higher level of education is likely to be younger, and this would be associated with carrying out activities that require more personal involvement (cultural and learning, tourism and travel, and associative participation activities) (Aberg 2016; Galenkamp and Deeg 2016; Liu and Lou 2016). This profile contrasts with that of those who have very limited participation in activities or who only report those related to their residential and immediate social environment. However, activities carried out outside the dwelling, that require physical effort (Hank 2011a; Scherger et al. 2011) and the level of education tend to decline

directly with age. This was noted especially in analysing cultural activities performed. Related to gender, non-statistical differences between men and women are found when exploring a general activity profile; when looking specifically at women's activities, gender differences can be more evident (Adamson and Parker 2006). In this context it was possible to verify that level of education and current activity status were the variables, which, in the obtained categorical regression model, could be hiding the fundamental role of gender and age as associated variables.

The highest educational level achieved was the third factor in the regression model. Two categories of completion of education (secondary and university or higher) showed a positive relationship with activities performed, particularly those that require greater personal involvement and motivation (social participation, learning, cultural, travel). It is also documented that level of education can reflect the influence of the socioeconomic status of both, the individual and the household (Beard and Petitot 2010). Through relationship with activity, retired people, having more free time, expressed some willingness to engage in an active ageing behaviour, especially in activities performed in residential and social environments. People of working age were mainly focused on personal involvement activities (cultural, educational, travel and tourism and associative participation), although more infrequently, probably due to more restricted free time.

Given the importance of the capacities related to health and physical and mental functioning on the quality of life of the population as it ages (Fernández-Mayoralas 2011), all variables in this dimension, apart from number of medicines taken, have been significantly associated with clusters of people identified. A clear relationship was noted among those who reported 'poor health' indicators and a lower trend towards active behaviour, in contrast to those who found no physical functioning impediments to spend their time actively (Koutsogeorgou et al. 2014; Neary et al. 2016). However, only functional capacity was retained when Spanish older adults

remain active. Both physical and mental capacities enabled the performing of activities without limitations (Galenkamp et al. 2016), as determinants for carrying out paid or unpaid social, support or productive (van Soest 2010; Liu and Lou 2016), or even innovative activities (Nimrod 2008). Moreover, better mental functioning is ideal for more personal and rewarding activities, such as learning (Liechty et al. 2012; Galenkamp et al. 2016) and associative participation (Lee et al. 2012). Socially, personal benefits are obtained by avoiding exclusion (Naegele and Schnabel 2010; Mendes 2013; Mackowicz and Wnek-Gozdek 2016).

The social environment is an essential component for an active ageing (Paúl et al. 2012). Literature has considered the importance of issues such as family structure, family and social networks, their density and quality, loneliness, etc. (Adams et al. 2011; Lee et al. 2011; Prieto-Flores et al. 2011; Pavelek 2013). However, in this study many variables had no statistical significance among active ageing profiles, such as frequency of contact with family members or, from a subjective viewpoint, perceived social support or loneliness. This is not the case of frequency of face-to-face contact with friends that was a fundamental issue to identify a more active profile when older adults interacted with the residential and social environment and participated in different types of associations. This situation helps to maintain good levels of physical and mental health and social support (Bowling and Stafford 2007). However, this variable is not so important when the activity is more specific (learning and travelling cluster), or low (cluster 4).

The satisfaction with the use of free time was also obtained as explaining factor. This subjective variable normally features in personal wellbeing models (Stenner et al. 2011; Rojo-Pérez and Fernández-Mayoralas 2011; Neary et al. 2016) and personal behaviours (Liechty et al. 2012; Ahmed-Mohamed et al. 2015). The degree of satisfaction with how an individual over 50 spends their free time was related, at its very highest levels (8.0 or higher out of 10.0), to greater active ageing, compared to lower values

which would be associated with a non-active behaviour (Lardiés-Bosque 2011). Such a variable, as with health or personal wellbeing, can be defined as a consequence or a cause of carrying out activities. This leads to a debate about the meaning of the health, wellbeing, other connected activities or satisfaction as consequences or inducers of activity (Haski-Leventhal 2009; Sirven and Debrand 2008; Galenkamp et al. 2016).

Residential environment is the geographical area of greatest place attachment among the elderly population (Michael et al. 2006), and its influence on the physical and mental functioning of individuals is a recognized trend in the literature (Rojo-Pérez et al. 2007). In this study, several variables of the residential environment are on the basis of the active behaviour. Thus, going to cultural or sports centres or visiting parks, as places of social contact easily accessed from dwelling, either on foot or by private or public transport, were associated with the most active subjects. Those with a low activity profile used these types of centres less frequently, due to diverse reasons related to poor health, lack of motivation or mobility. According to Bowling and Stafford (2007), accessing these resources helps maintain social support and interaction networks and social functioning (Pavelek 2013; Yung et al. 2016). Older individuals also recognize public facilities for an active way of life (An et al. 2013). Perception of problems (environmental pollution and dirtiness) in the area of residence was also associated with those participants who had greater activity, perhaps because of their greater integration and, therefore, greater awareness of their environment. Usually, an objective measurement of the value of the residential area might have been more appropriate to prevent the skewing of information perceived by the individual (Beard and Petitot 2010). However, the adaptation between the existence of environmental problems, as an indicator of the limited socioeconomic status of the living area, and the individual assessment of these problems is recognized as true and of varying influence in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (Bowling and Stafford 2007).

## 14.6 Final Remarks

As analysed in this paper, explaining active behaviour among older adults in Spain is a challenge with some difficulties for its operationalization. Without intending to be exhaustive, consideration ought to be given to certain research constraints, the most important of which are (i) combining objective and subjective measurements, (ii) creating a synthetic measure of activities (Bélanger et al. 2015), (iii) incorporating factors that may be inter-correlated and, therefore, obscure the importance of others as predictors of individual and social behavioural patterns, (iv) establishing relationships between the factors and activities, and (v) generalizing the explanation to groups of older adults with specific life situations and conditions.

A cross-sectional study such this is a suitable starting point for acquiring knowledge about the life processes of adaption to people's changing living conditions as they age. However, there is a general consensus that longitudinal studies could help to overcome those research difficulties to understand both active ageing and active living (Ahmed-Mohamed et al. 2015; Galenkamp and Deeg 2016; Liu and Lou 2016). Active ageing is not a process that arises when the population is older, but originates throughout one's life (Lloyd et al. 2014; Walker 2015) and has positive effects on quality of life (Paúl et al. 2012; Ahmed-Mohamed et al. 2015; Viana et al. 2015; Galenkamp et al. 2016; Mackowicz and Wnek-Gozdek 2016). Researching active ageing must be carried as a multidimensional phenomenon (Tam 2013), in which individual, social or residential environmental factors underlie the performance of different activities. Using a multidimensional survey and appropriate analytical techniques has enabled us to construct an interpretation of active ageing in Spain.

Furthermore, assessing the factors involved has helped reflect on the usefulness of the ELES Project Pilot Study in the field of active ageing, as a cross-sectional and preparatory sample for conducting longitudinal research in the near future. Ultimately, this research on active ageing in Spain has been guided by the need to help make this concept operational from the theoretical parameters usually considered in literature.

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# Visions of Good Life and Leisure in Ancient India: Evidence from Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*

**15**

Óscar Figueroa

**Abstract**

Quality of life is a broad or umbrella concept (Rojas, The measurement of quality of life: Conceptualization comes first. A four-qualities-of-life conceptual framework and an illustration to Latin America, 7, 2009; Susniene and Jurkauskas, Inzinerine Ekonomika Eng Econ 3:58, 2009). As such, articulating a universally accepted definition is not an easy task. Although the tendency has been to privilege measurable criteria in contemporary contexts, the necessity of gaining a deeper theoretical and historical understanding cannot be overlooked. The study of original texts from ancient cultures may prove to be illuminating, in that they may give access to visions of the good life in different historical periods and cultural settings, deepening our understanding. In this context, more and more authors are taking into consideration the influence of culture upon the meaning we usually ascribe to a good life and a good society (Christopher, J Couns Dev 77:141–152, 1999; Skevington, Qual Life Res 11:135–144, 2002). Others have tried to extend the reflection to key historical sources, tracing the development of the very ideas of happiness, well-being, etc. Yet, studies of such a kind mostly limit themselves to the history of Western thought. The approaches based on non-Western cultures are still rare (Iwasaki 2007, 233–235). Taking into consideration all this, in this paper I explore the specific case of the ancient Indian culture in all its social complexity, *i.e.* beyond the stereotyped vision of India as a pre-eminently spiritual culture, and therefore beyond the tendency to see its main contribution to the debate on quality of life also as a spiritual one. Ancient Indian advanced a number of ideas on what a good life should be like and be composed of.

## 15.1 By Way of Introduction: Quality of Life, Good Life, and the Indian Doctrine About the Objects of Human Pursuit

In the past two decades, the academic interest in the notion of quality of life has grown significantly, throwing much light on this notion's relationship with related concepts like happiness, leisure, subjective and objective well-being, along with other factors thought to contribute to experiencing a satisfactory life. In general, the

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concept "refers to a life which is considered as a good one, well-lived, and being of value" (Rojas 2009, 4). Of course, being such a broad or umbrella concept (Rojas 2009, 7; Susniene and Jurkauskas 2009, 58), articulating a universally accepted definition is not an easy task. In this regard, although the tendency has been to privilege measurable criteria in contemporary contexts, the necessity of gaining a deeper theoretical and historical understanding about the meaning of quality of life cannot be overlooked. Thus, it has been claimed that careful reflection should precede the urge to measure and prescribe (Rojas 2009, 5). As it may be expected, in the main this claim points to the importance of retrieving the comprehensive and multidimensional nature of the ideas of good life, well-being, and so on. In this context, many authors have taken into consideration the influence of culture upon the meaning we usually associate with a life of quality (Christopher 1999; Skevington 2002). Indeed, a number of contemporary definitions conceptualize quality of life as a socially and culturally constructed construct (Schalock et al. 2002). According to the influential definition of the World Health Organization, the concept of quality of life is inextricably linked to the "individuals' perception of their position in life in the context of culture and value system and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns" (WHOQOL Group 1997, 1).The same applies to the related ideas of leisure and recreation, seen as decisive factors in the perception of life as a good one. Thus, some have not only explored the relevant place leisure occupies in a good life, but have also called attention upon the important role played by culture and value systems in shaping individual's goals and expectations, and therefore in the meaning of leisure (Brajsa-Zganec et al. 2011).

In this context, in order to get a better picture of the present situation, some have tried to extend the reflection to key historical sources, tracing the development of the relevant ideas of happiness, well-being, leisure, etc. Yet, as it may be expected, studies of such a kind mostly limit themselves to the history of Western thought, rooted in classical Greek and Latin values, and

the Judeo-Christian worldview. In fact, "a western domination is an apparent phenomenon in both leisure research and quality of life research" (Iwasaki 2007, 235). The approaches that take into consideration and enrich the discussion with models taken from non-Western cultures, for instance the ancient cultures of Asia, are still rare, and they are therefore a desideratum (Iwasaki 2007, 233). Still fewer are the studies that attempt to reflect critically on the complex relationship between past and present in those cultures. For instance, how past ideas about happiness and a good life shape the present emphasis on certain models of quality of life? And more importantly, how contemporary ideas on quality of life are projected, as a strategy of legitimation, upon the past, overlooking or misrepresenting an originally diverse and complex cultural heritage? What we have then is a triple lacuna, and therefore a triple challenge: the reflection on quality of life and the related notions of good life, well being, etc. should ideally take into account (1) the history of those notions as culturally constructed constructs, (2) the history of those notions in non-Western cultures, and (3) the complexity of the relation past-present with respect to those notions in non-Western cultures.

What follows is an attempt to examine the particular case of Indian culture according to such premises. In particular, the study of original texts from ancient India may prove to be illuminating, in that they may give access to past ideals and views about good life and leisure, that may help to understand more carefully, and beyond stereotypes, why today predominate certain ideals, and why not others, and therefore to learn in what would consist in this case a more encompassing, multidimensional, vision of the good life.

As any other culture, ancient Indian tradition advanced a number of ideas on what a good life should be like and be composed of. Among these outstands the concept of *puruṣārtha,* literally "human purpose or goal", that is to say, the legitimate goals of life for high-caste Hindus. Originally envisioned as encompassing three major provinces of meaning, namely "moral responsibility and religious duty" *(dharma),* "material or worldly success" *(artha),* and

"enjoyment and pleasure" *(kāma),* the model attempted to codify the elements necessary for an integral and satisfactory human experience from a Brahmanical perspective. Moreover, the model was a way of structuring the very concept of human subject in Hindu discourse.

The important place the model has had in the history of Indian thought is not, however, free of tensions and conflicts. In particular, various textual testimonies indicate a tension between *dharma* and *kāma*, this latter encompassing the semantic fields we associate with the notions of pleasure, leisure, and recreation, for instance through activities such as literary gatherings and art expositions, music concerts and theatre performances, sports and games of chance, carousals, feasts and picnics, gardening and pet companionship, travelling, and of course a satisfactory sexual life (Lienhard 1984, 42).

In an important measure, the tension originates from the predominance normally attributed to *dharma* over any other goal. *Dharma* comes first because, conceived as the socio-cosmic order, it embraces appropriate belief and behaviour, and therefore is in charge of controlling any other object of human pursuit, including human proclivity towards pleasure. An authoritative text like the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* summarizes well this hierarchical idealization—and thus the latent tension among their components—,when it states: "The knowledge of *dharma* is prescribed for people who are unattached to wealth*(artha)*or pleasures*(kāma)*" (*Mānavadharmaśāstra* 2.13).

In this view, pleasure and leisure are legitimate, but must always be constrained by *dharma*. Pursued alone, outside the domain of *dharma,* *kāma* may deviate the individual from the truth. In the popular discourse, this vision prevails today, projecting upon the past the stereotyped vision of India as a pre-eminently spiritual culture. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that the majority of studies devoted to quality of life in contemporary India from a cultural, non-quantitative perspective, focus on spirituality (notably, on the practices of meditation and yoga) as ancient India's main contribution to the concept of quality of life, overlooking other aspects or alternatives. A good example is the work of

Sharma (2002), who reduces India's contribution to quality of life to the Vedantic understanding of leisure as "state of being as against one of having or doing", as a means to cleanse the mind from its impurities, or in connection with the practice of yoga, as a way to experience the "true self" and harmonising the body, mind, and consciousness (18–19). Moreover, in Sharma's dharmic-religious and orthodox oriented view, Vedic rituals provide a "high degree of leisure", keeping people healthy and happy within the larger society (22).

Again, beyond the relevance of such contributions, the question remains open from a more critical perspective: Is this really all what ancient India has to offer to the debate on the ideas of good life, well-being, etc.? Or is it, instead, that this all what contemporary status quo India *assumes* ancient India has to offer, overlooking or even silencing other possibilities?

Back to the doctrine of the *puruṣārthas*, this certainly was a matter of debate in the ancient sources, and there arose various forms of resistance against the standard opinion, for instance by advocating not only interconnectedness and alternated predominance, but sometimes even the superiority of *kāma*.

Now, the earliest occurrences of the term *puruṣārtha* can be traced back to the Vedic period, especially in a number of normative treatises on ritual, where the emphasis seems to lie in the articulation of a sacrificial meaning for all human concerns and expectations. Therefore, in these texts, the meaning of the term *puruṣārtha* is circumscribed to the laws of sacrifice that govern the entire cosmos. Yet, some centuries later, the term started to have wider implications, less restricted to the impersonal sphere of ritual, and more proximate to human aspirations as such. It was in this context that it was articulated the system of three goals or "the group of three" *(tri-varga),* as it is often called in the texts themselves. We are in the first centuries of the Common Era, a fact that should not be overlooked.

This period bore witness to a decisive change in Sanskrit intellectual tradition: the Brahmanical monopoly—to use Sheldon Pollock's expression (2006, cap. 5)—over the production of

authoritative knowledge gradually lost its strength. Paradoxically, this undermining brought an expansion of Sanskrit's expressive power from the purely religious domain to that of culture in general. Sanskrit language left to be used to articulate and legitimate religious truths only. Instead, new genres and language usages arose, among them treatises on various disciplines, grouped together under the term *śāstra*. More importantly, this expansion signalled the beginning of Sanskrit literature as a genre—called *kāvya,* and encompassing drama, poetry, literary prose, etc. (Figueroa 2014a, and b).

In this way, Sanskrit was used for the first time to tell stories before unthinkable, for instance to narrate the deeds of the princely class or to tell love stories; it began to pay attention to characters before absent, like merchants, Casanovas, and prostitutes; it was even used to mock at pretentious Brahmins and hypocrite religious mendicants. More specifically, all sorts of poems and dramas were composed to celebrate the pleasures of love, and strategies for seduction were compiled in texts like the famous *Kāmasūtra*. As one may expect, the old tension between *dharma* and *kāma* became more evident in such a novel atmosphere.

The greater emphasis on human aspirations per se, independently of any connection with ritual or religion, opened the door for affirming the legitimacy of *kāma* in itself. It is at this important conjuncture that exploring the concepts of good life and well-being in ancient India from a socio-historical perspective can become illuminating beyond contemporary normativeexpectations.

Back to history, it was of course necessary to articulate more complex strategies of interaction between *kāma* and *dharma*. Some of these strategies were thematised in the texts themselves. Two foundational texts offer a good example of this act of awareness: the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Rāmāyaṇa.* In the first pages of these two texts, we find frame stories that account for the origin respectively of dramatic art and poetry, the two principal domains of *kāvya*. In both cases, we come across with the same rationale: drama and poetry are meant no to only to inculcate the Brahmanical ethos, but also to entertain, acknowl-

edging thus the importance of mere enjoyment and leisure activities as an integral component of a good life.

Thus, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the gods approached the Creator God Brahma, asking for a new Veda. This should be edifying and able to produce religious merit *(pūṇya),* but also entertaining and captivating *(manorama)* (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 1.12-15)*.* Brahma's response was the dramatic art. On the other hand, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s first chapters we find Brahma instructing the sage Vālmīki as follows: "Greatest of seers, you must now compose the entire history of Rāma […] No utterance of yours in this poem shall be false. Now compose the story of Rāma fashioned into verses at the same time sacred and delightful" (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 1.2.31, 35).[1] In this way, against the Brahmanical monopoly over Sanskrit, with a life of almost a millennium, *kāvya* represented a kind of counterculture (Pollock 2006, cap. 5). Within that counterculture secular interests, including man's proclivity toward recreation and leisure, as well as other experiences associated with *kāma,* finally obtained literary legitimacy, as can be proved from the plot of countless dramas, poems, and narratives produced between the second and twelfth centuries CE, *i.e.,* throughout the classical period of the Sanskrit tradition.

Of course, we speak of a veiled way of introducing novelty. Indeed, it was a subtle way of emancipation, for it was necessary to avoid conflict with the canon. Therefore, the strategy cannot be reduced to the usual opposition between sacred and profane—think in classic authors like Émile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade. Again, as I will try to show using as example the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the strategy contradicts the stereotyped tendency to locate the Indian tradition exclusively on the side of religion and spirituality. Specifically, the episode I want to call attention to introduces a sort of poetics of leisurely life, in which both

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[1]All my translations from the *Rāmāyaṇa* reproduce the English version of R. Goldman, S. Sutherland, and Sh. Pollock (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*), with a few minor changes of my own. Translations from other Sanskrit texts are mine.

religious and secular elements are equally important as part of a more heterogeneous social *dynamis*. In this way, the study of the dilemma between *dharma* and *kāma* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* may give access to potentially illuminating ideals and visions of the good life, contributing thus to the topic of the present volume.

## 15.2    The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki

Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, one of the two great epic poems written in the Sanskrit language, and one of the most influential texts in the construction of the Indian identity through a large number of renderings and new versions in other Indian languages, contains a number of illuminating testimonies about our theme here. In those passages we find literarily articulated a complex mechanism of interaction between religious life and secular life. Thus, in the following sections of this article my purpose will be to explore an important episode in the epic's fifth book. With this exploration, I try to throw light on the theme of this volume dedicated to well-being and quality of life from the perspective of the study of ancient cultures.

But in order to appreciate better the episode's relevance for our theme here, it may be useful to recall that the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or at least the version attributed to the legendary poet Vālmīki, was composed throughout almost a millennium, between the fifth and fourth centuries BCE and the fourth and fifth centuries CE, exactly the period that bore witness to the change in the Sanskrit intellectual tradition I mentioned before. Moreover, the fact that the tradition defines Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* as the first literary work, the "first poem" *(ādikāvya),*[2] is indicative of its centrality in this transformation, which, again, had a definitive impact upon the relationship between religious and secular life, between

*dharma* and *kāma*, and therefore it is indicative of a crucial change in the perception of what a good life should be like and be composed of.

*Rāmāyaṇa*'s plot consists of two main narratives. On the one hand, the princely story about the intrigue at the court of Ayodhyā that prompted the abdication to the throne and a forced exile of king Daśaratha's eldest and most virtuous among his four sons—the hero Rāma, who is thus obliged to live in the forest during fourteen years accompanied by his wife, princess Sītā, and his loyal brother Lakṣmaṇa. On the other, the love story between the leading characters, Rāma and Sītā, a love truncated first by the lust of the demon king Rāvaṇa who kidnaps Sītā, and later on by the doubts of Rāma about the purity of his wife.

Again, the relationship between these two narratives, as well as the intrinsic tension among them, contains the necessary ingredients to reflect upon the tension between the religious and the secular in ancient India from a critical perspective. Both narratives attempted to respond to the dilemma of the period, *i.e.* the atmosphere of crisis around *dharma*. And yet, their respective answer was far from being definitive: at the centre of the discrepancy one finds again pleasure *(kāma),* an essential component of secular life and the main trait of the antagonist, the powerful Rāvaṇa. Thus, while from Rāma's point of view, it is necessary to purge *dharma* from *kāma,* and therefore the ideal life from leisure and enjoyment for the sake of an ascetic universal ethos; on the other hand, here and there the text seems to flirt with a more accommodating vision of human life, one in which leisure and pleasure can have a place side by side with *dharma*.

Thus, away from the paternal protective atmosphere associated with the city of Ayodhyā, the forest exile becomes for Rāma an experience of vindication and redemption. Rāma goes to the forest to purge *dharma*, the law, to his eyes corrupted by desire. To that end, he exposes himself to the ascetic wisdom of anchorites and sages, while repelling the permanent threat of febrile and lascivious creatures, the demons *(asura, rākṣasa)*.

In the plot, this threat reaches a first crescendo with the appearance of the demon king Rāvaṇa,

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[2]Already in the second century CE, the Buddhist writer Aśvaghoṣa celebrated: "Vālmīki was the first who created a verse" (*Buddhacarita* 1.43). On the basis of the celebrated passage of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s first book partially quoted above (1.2.31-35), all Sanskrit literary genealogies repeat the same idea.

who fell in love with princess Sītā, and concocted a successful scheme to kidnap her. From this point, the plot revolves around Rāma's efforts to recover Sītā and defeat Rāvaṇa. This involves an alliance with the monkey clan, in particular with the prodigious monkey minister Hanumān. Aided by the monkeys, Rāma travels to the South, up to the island of Laṅkā, the capital of the demons, where he fights the demon armies and Rāvaṇa, whom he kills—a death that symbolizes the victory of *dharma* over *kāma*. After this, Rāma returns to Ayodhyā, recovers the kingdom and governs justly for eras.

The episode I'm here concerned with is the description of the city of Laṅkā, the capital of Ravaṇa. The description is part of the preliminary expedition undertaken by Hanumān, the loyal monkey ally of the hero Rāma, to recover princess Sītā.

Let us go into the details.

## 15.3   Dharma Versus Kāma: Rāma's Conflict with His Father, King Daśaratha

In order to understand the tension between *dharma* and *kāma* in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*—a tension symbolically represented through the open fight between the hero Rāma and the demon king Rāvaṇa—, is necessary to go back to the conflict between Rāma and his father, king Daśaratha. This means that it is necessary to say something about the conflict that deprived the hero from the throne, and put him in the exile. Even though the popular reception of the *Rāmāyaṇa* has attempted to attenuate the discord between Rāma and his father, presenting Rāma's submission towards the paternal authority as a virtue and a sign of nobility, a number of textual passages in Vālmīki's version indicate a more ambivalent relationship. For instance, the first night the exiled hero spends at the other side of the Ganges River, that is to say, beyond the boundaries of Ayodhyā, and therefore beyond the boundaries of the paternal stability, he allows himself to bitterly complain about his situation.

In this context, he implicitly admits that the king's decision to send him into the exile is but an injustice. Moreover, Rāma joins his brother Lakṣmaṇa in a judgment that will come to the surface again and again: the injustice *(adharma)* has its origin in a specific defect, namely Daśaratha's proclivity to pleasure *(kāma)*. Specifically, the king's fault is connected with his second wife, Kaikeyī, the mother of Bharata, the prince who benefited from Rāma's exile by taking up the throne:

> And being old and defenceless, and parted from me what will he do? Such is his desire for Kaikeyī that he is completely in her power. Reflecting on this calamity and how the king so utterly changed his mind; I have come to the conclusion that the urgings of *kāma* far outweigh both statecraft and *dharma*. For what man, even a fool, would forsake his own son—a son who ever bowed to his will—on account of a woman, as father forsook me, Lakṣmaṇa (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 2.47.8-10).

See also 2.28.3, where Rāma, still in Ayodhyā, complains about his father during a conversation with Lakṣmaṇa: "The mighty lord of the land, who used to shower his other wives with all they desired, as a rain showers the earth, is now caught up in the snare of *kāma (kāmapāśa)*".

Daśaratha's inability to dominate his appetites, submitting them to the demands of an impersonal *dharma,* helped Kaikeyī to eclipse the sense of justice of the old king, forcing him to banish his dear first-born son from the kingdom. It is useful to recall in this context, that Kaikeyī punishes sexually king Daśaratha in order to press him to concede the throne to her son Bharata and send Rāma into exile (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 2.9–12). Therefore, the punishment clearly was an attempt at capitalizing Daśaratha's proclivity to pleasure. And it worked. Instead of defending Rāma, Daśaratha ended up giving in to Kaikeyī's blackmail.

In this way, by identifying the fault of his father with *kāma*, Rāma set his agenda: to restore *dharma* not per se but against desire. In fact, from beginning to end, the greatness of the hero obsessed with the image of a perfect king rests in the attempt at purging monarchy from any insinuation of desire, regardless of how painful this

can be. At the same time, the legitimacy of a new, purer *dharma* demands the continuity of the paternal-royal figure. Therefore, it is necessary a moral and politically correct strategy. A direct confrontation with Daśaratha is ruled out from the beginning.

In the text, the alternative strategy acquires form first as the necessity to universalize *dharma*, that is to say, to rethink it according to wider criteria, away from the relativism and the utilitarianism to which, according to Rāma, desire condemns it. The solution can only be found in the religious world, embodied in the figure of the renouncer. Rāma's undertaking finds thus its inspiration in the image of a spiritualized king, an ascetic-prince. He was not alone in this. Rather, he simply reproduces a tendency of his time, as demonstrated from a number of historic and literary testimonies. Think, to name the most obvious examples, in the transformation of prince Siddhārta Gautama into the Buddha, or in that of prince Vardhamāna into the Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism; or in a literary context, in the teachings of Kṛṣṇa to prince Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā*, and in general in the forest exile of the Pāṇḍavas in the *Mahābhārata.* And there is no better place to experience the combination prince-ascetic than the forest. In this way, Rāma's exile acquires a new meaning.

On the other hand, it is necessary to expiate the fault of the father and this can only be achieved by punishing desire. Again, we deal here with a paternal figure, and therefore the punishment cannot be inflicted directly. It has to be inflicted symbolically. It is necessary to displace the problem to another figure. That is the role played by Rāvaṇa, the antagonist, the lord of Laṅkā, the city of pleasure and leisure.

This vision of *dharma* as excluding *kāma* is therefore constitutive of the idealized and normative concept of the good life in ancient India, and it has deeply influenced contemporary opinion about India's historical contribution to the study of quality of life. In what follows, I will try to show that what we can learn from ancient India for the study of quality of life is far more complex and illuminating.

## 15.4 Dharma Versus Kāma: Rāma's Conflict with Rāvaṇa

What cannot happen with the father—an open condemnation—can happen instead with Rāvaṇa. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the lord of Laṅkā is characterized in the text as the very incarnation of desire, as the hedonist par excellence, at the other extreme of the renouncer who defeats desire or the householder who legitimates desire through conjugal union only.

Again, by doing so, the *Rāmāyaṇa* did not introduce any novelty. It simply repeated an old consensus, now literarily enriched: if something defines *asuras, rākṣasas,* and many other similar creatures associated with the forces of chaos, is an incontinent proclivity towards pleasure. The motif appears already in the Vedic corpus. For instance, in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* we read that demons are the "masters of the amatory arts" (*Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 3.2.1.40). In sum, through Rāvaṇa, the hero is able to revive the conflict with the father, but upon a morally correct fundament, namely, by means of a demonization of desire.

In this, I concord with those who question the tendency to see in such creatures the Other beyond Sanskrit culture (for example, an ethnic group at the periphery), and even consider idle such a predictable line of thought. In reality, the demonic is the Other—*kāma*—within the Identity—*dharma*—.What the demons represent has a profound resonance in the audience because demons direct our attention toward that which most seduces Brahmanical India insofar as it is prohibited.

In this sense, by translating routinely the terms *asura, rākṣasa,* and many others, as "demon", it might be useful to have in mind the deepest sense of this word. Think in its connotations in Greek tradition and later, associated with figures like Luzbel (the Luminous one) and Satan (the Adversary), in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. More than simple evil entities, demons are supernatural beings who took the decision to oppose the cosmic and divine Order to the point of passing as rebels, despite their proximity—sometimes

even genealogical—to the gods. In this sense, demons embody not only an intrinsic element to reality, but in many cases a necessary component, in that they can act as a source of change and equilibrium.

Back to the *Rāmāyaṇa,* here the demons eat, drink, and love without any restriction whatsoever. And therefore, their behaviour violates the logic of the Brahmanical normative codes, articulated according to the basic opposition purity-impurity *(śuddhi-aśuddhi).* As such, demons represent the freedom to act by pleasure, in particular in delicate domains like those associated with diet and sexuality (Pollock 1985–1986). Unlike king Daśaratha, who lived with guilt his proclivity to pleasure, for he always felt himself "bound by the bond of *dharma*" (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 2.12.16), Rāvaṇa ennobled desire without regret or guilt. Rather, he displayed the powerful logic of desire to the point of raise it to the status of *dharma*. For example, in the episode where he reveals his true identity just before kidnapping princess Sītā, he openly declares:

> Living with me, proud princess Sītā, you shall forget what it was like to have been a mortal woman. Enjoying not only the pleasures mortals enjoy, lovely lady, but divine pleasures, too, you shall soon forget that short-lived mortal, Rāma. So meagre is his power that King Daśaratha, in order to enthrone a favoured son, was able to drive him into the forest, firstborn though he was. What use is this witless Rāma to you, large-eyed woman, a miserable ascetic who lets himself be deposed from kingship? The lord of all demons has come here in person, because that was his desire *(kāmāt)* […] Love me forever. I shall be a lover to win your praise, and never, my beauty, will I do anything to displease you (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 3.46.13-17 and 3.47.12).

His words are revealing. They do not only offer a negative judgment about Rāma's attempt at integrating ascetic values into the princely *dharma*. Rather, they establish the limits of any search after a universal *dharma* vis-à-vis *kāma*. Rāma can only love in the name of duty, but not in the name of love itself. A true king, we read between the lines, is he who loves with the total freedom of his will, because he wants, not because he must.

Therefore, the matter goes beyond a mere opposition between religion and secular life. Rāvaṇa is much more than a monstrous creature, as the monkey Hanumān himself acknowledges when he sees him for the first time resting in his splendid palace in the walled city of Laṅkā:

> Oh what beauty! What steadfastness! What strength! What splendour! Truly, the king of all demons is endowed with every virtue! If this mighty demon lord were not so unacquainted with *dharma*, he could be the guardian of the world of the gods, Indra included (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.47.17–18).

## 15.5   The Vision of Laṅkā

The admiration is of course extensible to the entire demonic kingdom, and in a concentrated way to Rāvaṇa's majestic capital, the walled city of Laṅkā. Under this light, the view of the demonic universe as the Other within—not outside—Identity may prove to be illuminating in connection also with the socio-urban landscape of Laṅkā. Therefore, instead of speaking about a physical space, it may be more useful to speak about an imaginary space. This latter is associated with Brahmanical culture itself seen, once again, from the perspective of *kāma*.

Even though the geographical location of the island, in the antipodes of Ayodhyā, Rāma's capital, may suggest that it is totally alien to the Brahmanical status quo, it suffices to follow the curious Hanumān crossing its ramparts, roaming around its parks and streets, peeping into its mansions and palaces to notice a strong similitude between Laṅkā and Ayodhyā. Laṅkā is at the same time proximate and remote—it is a kind of distorted mirror. On the one hand, the narrative insistently repeats the literary motifs introduced in the first book to describe Ayodhyā (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 1.5); on the other, however, while depicting the city's opulence and the refined habits of its inhabitants, immersed in a permanent experience of sybaritic abandonment, the text seems to assert the importance of leisure and pleasure as key components for experiencing a good life. In this way, the censorious

tone seems to lose ground vis-à-vis the many compliments. This occurs to the point of projecting a very different image in comparison to what up to here had been said about the demonic universe, especially in the epic's third book. As part of this momentary literary truce, the otherwise fearsome and sanguinary *rākṣasas* start to resemble more the joyful Casanovas and bon vivants that fill the pages of Sanskrit classical poetry and didactic literature.

Furthermore, the very title of the book that contains the vision of Laṅkā, the epic's fifth book, surprises us with its positive spirit. Contrary to what we would expect, the title does not communicate aversion nor does it evoke something sinister. Rather, it is the "Book about Beauty"*(sundarakāṇḍa)*. Even though among the scholars still persist the doubts as to the title's *raison d'être* and its exact meaning, most recent interpretations differ from the opinion of early Indologists like Hermann Jacobi (1893, 124) or Maurice Winternitz, (1927, vol. 1, 490), who favoured the idea of an aesthetical judgment on the literary quality of the book. As R. Goldman and S. Sutherland have stated in this regard: "To our knowledge no section of any Sanskrit literary work is given a name reflecting a critical judgement of its poetic merit"(1996, 76).

Instead, they think the title has more to do with the topics narrated, most of them connected with the events that lead to Rāma's victory and his reencounter with Sītā. Of course, as one may anticipate, such a point of view responds to a normative expectative, and therefore it has revolved around the heroes:

> The traditional response to the question as to why the *Sundarakāṇḍa* is so named or, to phrase it differently, what is so beautiful about the book, is the recitation of a widely known verse: "In the *Sundarakāṇḍa* Rāma is beautiful. In the *Sundarakāṇḍa* the monkey is beautiful. In the *Sundarakāṇḍa* Sītā is beautiful. What is not beautiful in the *Sundarakāṇḍa*? (Goldman and Sutherland 1996, 77).

But might it be possible to stretch out this opinion to Laṅkā? Would the tradition have in mind the depiction of the city when it coined the title "Beauty"? Here, it may be important to

recall that three other books in the *Rāmāyaṇa*—the second, third, and fourth books—are named after the location in which the events take place, respectively in Ayodhyā (the capital of Rāma's dynasty), the Forest, and Kiṣkindhā (the capital of the monkey kingdom).

The question remains thus open. Let us limit ourselves therefore to the famous scene, which, as I said before, betrays a definitive yet unexpected turn in the way the text imagines the demonic world—offering thus an ideal literary testimony for peeping into the complex interaction between religious and secular life in ancient India. I have in mind the cantos five to twelve, in which Hanumān is depicted while going over the city, inspecting each corner in search of princess Sītā.

To begin with, it should be stressed the very fact that it is the look of a monkey, not a human look, the one which introduces the reader into this universe, at the same time repugnant and captivating. This simple narrative element should make us feel how unusual is the event. It would have been simply scandalous to put the hero Rāma in such a situation: amazed at the beauty of his rival's city. At the same time, however, that did not prevent the authors of the *Rāmāyaṇa* from composing and including the episode. What they did was simply to attenuate its implications by resorting narratively to an inferior figure—a monkey. Thus, the mechanism that underlies the entire episode can be summarized as follows: in the very act of disdaining or belittling, there is affirmation and even praise.

The mechanism is particularly evident is the oscillating personality of Hanumān throughout the episode. At one moment he may look fascinated, and yet at the next, guilty and filled with doubts. Hence, while in the first cantos we observe the prodigious monkey making military calculations and moral judgments, a few stanzas later, as if he had forgotten its mission, we observe him strolling around, marvelled at the magnificent urban setting being displayed before his eyes. This sort of aesthetical surrender allows the reader to enter into the city, peeping through the windows, and knowing at first-hand the behaviour of its inhabitants.

What follows is a true explosion of voyeurism. This culminates in the exquisite vision of Rāvaṇa's harem, and finally in the vision of the very bedroom of the powerful lord of the demons (cantos 7–8). Seen in this light, Hanumān's doubts and moral retractions end up having the opposite effect. Although they are communicated in order to exculpate the humble monkey from any fault, at the same time they emphasize the greatness of the reality displayed before his entranced eyes.

In this way, again contrary to our expectations, the city of evil is depicted as a beautiful and elegantly dressed up woman (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.3.18), as a marvellous, incredible and worth of seeing place (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.2.52-54, 5.3.10), in which natural beauty, architectonic refinement, and artistic grace meet. Splendid lakes and delicate arboreal fragrances, beautiful terraces and sumptuous palaces, music and art of the highest quality captivate the five senses:

> Then having leapt the vast ocean, Hanumān, foremost among the mighty and most eminent of leaping monkeys, proceeded swiftly to Laṅkā. He passed through deep blue meadows and fragrant woodlands filled with boulders and great trees. And Hanumān, powerful bull among monkeys, strode onward past thickly forested hills and groves of blossoming trees. Standing of that mountain, the son of the wind god spied woods and parks and the city of Laṅkā. The great monkey saw lovely parklands and all kinds of lakes and pleasure groves completely covered with every sort of tree that blossomed and bore fruit in all seasons […] As Hanumān gazed all around him at the city of Laṅkā, his heart was filled with wonder. Its gateways were of gold; the enclosures within them were paved with emeralds. Those gateways were adorned with mosaics of gemstones, crystals, and pearls. And they were adorned with reliefs of refined gold and shone brightly with silver. Their floors and stairways were made of emerald. And their crystalline interiors were utterly spotless. They had beautiful courtyards. Their structures seemed almost to soar into the sky. They echoed with the sound of cranes and peacocks, and they were thronged by royal swans. The city resounded on every side with the sounds of musical instruments and ornaments[…] With its splendid mansions resounding with the sounds of laughter and musical instruments, marked with thunderbolts and elephant goads, and ornamented with diamond

fretwork, the city was as lovely as the sky with its great clouds […] And here and there Hanumān heard the sound of hands clapping and the murmur of pleasant conversation (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.2.5-11 and 5.3.8-11, 21-22, 26; see also 5.4.7, 5.5.11-42, etc.).

This clearly suggests that the kind of leisure activities which were prevalent during *Rāmāyaṇa* era are mostly the same activities associated in later texts with the vindication of *kāma* as a central component for the notions of good life and well-being. This includes all kinds of artistic expressions, as well as sports and games of chance, carousals, feasts and picnics, gardening, etc. (Lienhard 1984, 42). The essence of all these activities is physical and intellectual cultivation, and the development of a sense of beauty. In this view, the province of meaning associated with *kāma* cannot be reduced to ordinary pleasure. Rather, it involves a highly aestheticized experience of daily life and a beautification of the person's surroundings and routines.

The final verdict is repeated again and again: Laṅkā resembles the city of all semi divine creatures (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.2.48), it is a celestial city (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.2.18, 5.3.12), a divine city (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.3.35). Particularly significant is the fact that the verdict allows there conciliation, right in the same space, between the horrendous aspects of secular life and the purity of religious life (see for instance *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.3.26, 5.3.28-29, and 5.5.12). Again, the hinge that reunites and harmonizes these extremes is daily life, with its natural proclivity towards pleasure and leisure (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.4.9-10, 5.4.14-19).

Again, the type of life Hanumān finds displayed in Laṅkā cannot be reduced to perverse hedonism. It is not the type of life condemned by religious puritanism. Rather, the episode's almost hypnotic cadence seems to evoke a sensuality of a higher order. It seems to introduce a sort of meta-category that accounts for the infinite variety of human experience, with leisure as a key component. It is therefore a life where the sacred and the profane, the portent and the ordinary coexist.

The narrative acquires greater intensity in the proximity of Rāvaṇa. Unable to wake up from his bewitchment, Hanumān penetrates into the area of palaces, and once there he reaches the main hall *(śālā)* of Rāvaṇa's palace, extolled on account of its divine nature, a place that "refreshed the spirit and brightened the complexion. It banished all sorrow. It was heavenly and like the very source of all splendour" (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.7.25). Excited, the monkey concludes: "This must be heaven! This must be the realm of the gods! This must be the citadel of Indra! Or perhaps, it is the highest goal of perfection!" (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.7.27). In this way, he introduces the tone for the treatment Rāvaṇa himself is going to receive. As I anticipated, this tone contrasts heavily with the image of a vulgar hedonist, the rapist of innocent women.

Not casually described here in his human form, with one head and two arms, Rāvaṇa is now a creature of dazzling beauty and immense vigour; someone whose countless virtues immediately make women fall in love, making unnecessary and almost unconceivable the resource of violence: "For these women were the daughters of royal seers and other divine beings. And they were all passionately in love with him. That immensely powerful warrior had, however, not taken a single one of the women there by force; rather, they had been won over by his virtues" (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.7.65–66).

At this point, the doubts, guilt, and the need to subdue the aesthetic impulse to the demands of *dharma*, sound almost ironical. The irony will reach the heroin herself, princess Sītā. The literary pattern can be summarized according to the formula I saw this, I saw that, and also that else, but did not see Sītā, "born in a royal family fixed in the path of righteousness" (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.4.21), that is to say, the woman who resists this vision of plenitude opposed to the Brahmanical order.

The irony behind this pattern emerges with all its power in the celebrated vision of the harem. Dominated by love, beautiful feminine bodies lie around a man who is vigour incarnated, the most concentrated expression of a life which has as its main value the here and now. From those bodies emanates a state of placidity and intoxication. The scene is so powerful that Hanumān, in a lapse, compares those women with Sītā, introducing doubts in the audience, the doubts that will trouble Rāma up to the end of the story: "Suddenly, the pure-minded monkey lord was struck by this thought: 'If the lawful wife of Rāma is in any way like these wives of the demon king, then it is a lucky thing for him indeed'. Then, overwhelmed once more by sorrow, he thought, 'But surely Sītā's virtues make her unique'" (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.7.68-69).

But the feeling of remorse—the voice of *dharma*—is in reality fleeting and weak, for just a few steps ahead the experience of poetic redemption reappears in the vision of Mandodarī, Rāvaṇa's principal wife:

> Then the monkey saw one extraordinarily beautiful woman sleeping on a magnificent bed that was set apart from those of the other women. She was beautifully adorned with jewellery studded with pearls; and she seemed to ornament that magnificent palace with her own radiant beauty. It was fair Mandodarī, the beautiful, golden-skinned, and deeply beloved queen of the inner apartments, that the monkey saw sleeping there. When he saw her so richly be jewelled, the great armed son of the wind god reasoned on the basis of her extraordinary beauty and youth: "This must be Sītā!" And filled with tremendous excitement, the leader of the monkey troops rejoiced. He clapped his upper arms and kissed his tail. He rejoiced, he frolicked, he sang, he capered about. He bounded up the columns and leapt back to the ground, all the while clearly showing his monkey nature.
> But the great monkey dismissed that notion and, once more recovering his composure, took up another line of thought concerning Sītā: "That lovely lady would never sleep apart from Rāma, nor would she eat, drink, or adorn herself. Nor would she ever go near another man, even the lord of the gods. For Rāma has no peer, even among the thirty gods themselves. This must be someone else" (*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 5.8.46-51, 9.1-2).

With all these innocent "mistakes" of perception, followed by timid exercises of contrition, clearly the poet plays at stretching the rope to the maximum, tempting thus the audience with the possibility that Sītā may belong to a world where *kāma* is not subordinated to *dharma*. Some have argued that this play seeks to satisfy certain liter-

ary expectations (Goldman-Sutherland: 69–70). Yet, the fact is that such an intention demands, in order to gain credibility, an image where the limits between the religious and the secular fade. The highest vision is not one which excludes or subordinates *kāma*'s province of meaning, but rather one which poetically emancipates it.

We find here an Indian vision of the good life that stays away from the more normative and today prevalent emphasis on *dharma* alone. As such, it constitutes a potentially illuminating Indian contribution to contemporary debate on the concept of quality of life from the historical perspective of a non-Western culture.

## 15.6   By Way of Conclusion

As it is well-known, the tension between *dharma* and *kāma* will reach negatively the protagonists: the price Rāma has to pay in order to affirm the sacredness of his ascetic *dharma* is Sītā herself, situated on the side of desire since the moment Rāvaṇa kidnapped her. The incompatibility between *dharma* and *kāma* has been gradually built by the plot: it appears first in the human realm (in Ayodhyā, through Rāma's conflict with his father), from there it migrates to the animal realm (in Kiṣkindhā, through the confrontation, also with sexual implications, between the monkey leaders Sugrīva and Vālī), and finally to the demonic or supernatural realm (in Laṅkā, through the conflict with Rāvaṇa). In this way, the incompatibility between *dharma* and *kāma* sets the conditions not only to legitimate, but also to anticipate the separation of Rāma and Sītā. But again, on the way to that normative outcome, even if only tangentially, the *Rāmāyaṇa* offers an alternative, conciliatory and more encompassing solution in the episode of the fifth book I have just examined.

Of course, in order to answer the question of how and when the purely *dharma*-oriented interpretation of our case here became dominant, one should need to analyse the process of reception of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a process that transformed the protagonist into a divine avatar and the text itself into sacred scripture—most notoriously in the

extremely popular *Rāmcaritmanas,* written by Tulsidās in a dialectal variant of Hindi towards the year 1574. However, such analysis is beyond the scope of our reflection here.

Therefore, let us conclude by reiterating instead that the vision of Laṅkā in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the earliest crystallization of the story of Rāma and Sītā, constitutes a significant literary testimony about the sociocultural complexity of ancient India. As I have tried to show, this particular episode acknowledges a plural social *dynamis,* in which religiosity and secular concerns coexist in equilibrium. In that *dynamis* the opposition sacred-profane is subordinated to a higher order, in which desire and daily life, leisure and man's proclivity to pleasure and beauty are affirmed and seem to get rid of the normative burden of orthodoxy. Moreover, the purely moral-religious view surrenders itself to a poetic-aesthetic view that calls into question the dichotomy religious life-secular life.

Does this narrative provide new insights into ancient India's contribution to contemporary debate on good life and quality of life? I think so. The episode is worth of attention for a number of reasons. First, it teaches how illuminating can be the study of original texts from ancient non-Western cultures, in that they may give access to ideals and views about good life that may deepen our understanding of quality of life beyond the dominant yet ultimately narrow emphasis on contemporary Western societies, and of course beyond merely measurable criteria. Also, in the wider context of the Indian doctrine of the objects of human pursuit *(puruṣārthas),* the relationship between *dharma* and *kāma* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* constitutes a rich resource upon which one can draw for contemporary reflection. More specifically, the episode calls into question the image of India as a purely religious culture, and presents us instead a more complex panorama. Retrieving the multi-layered visions of the good life in ancient India, even if these occur as literary testimonies, help to articulate a more balanced view of that which this culture regarded as a good life, avoiding thus the stereotyped image of India as a purely spiritual culture, and therefore avoiding the tendency to see its main contribution to the

debate on quality of life also as a spiritual one. Rather, the larger picture seems to corroborate the idea that *also in India* quality of life can be defined as personal satisfaction with the current life dimensions (here represented by *artha* and *kāma*) in comparison with the pursued or ideal quality of life (here represented by *dharma*). In particular, the vision of Laṅkā in the *Rāmāyaṇa* may be relevant to contemporary debates on the possibility of articulating, *again also in India,* models of life designed not to constrain or exclude but to conciliate and include. In its implicit recognition of a plurality of social behaviours, human purposes and pursuits, ancient India has certainly much to offer to the concept of quality of life beyond the ideas of sacredness and spirituality, or the practice of yoga and meditation. Again, to appreciate such contribution more deeply, one needs to take history seriously, with critical awareness of the complex relationship between past and present.

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# Part II

## Physical Activity and Sports

# Physical Activity and Subjective Wellbeing

# 16

Robert A. Cummins

**Abstract**

The idea, 'exercise is good for you', is so ingrained in Western thinking it has the status of lore. Moreover, since the time of the Romans, this belief has applied to both physical and mental health: A healthy mind in a healthy body. But is exercise really good for subjective wellbeing and, if so, why? While the general impression conveyed by the quality of life literature is that the aphorism does indeed apply to subjective wellbeing, looks can be deceiving. In fact, much of the supportive literature is based on methodologically weak studies presented in the absence of testable theory. This essay examines the literature from a critical methodological perspective coupled with current understanding of subjective wellbeing. Central to this examination is the theory of subjective wellbeing homeostasis. The view that emerges is one where the positive relationship between physical activity and subjective wellbeing is due mainly to facilitated social relationships. The implications of this understanding for the enhancement of life quality are substantial.

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## 16.1 Introduction

There is little doubt that regular exercise is associated with physical fitness and physical health (Haskell et al. 2007a, b). Far less certain is the link between physical activity levels and a sense of personal wellbeing. This is so despite an immense literature concerning this topic. Following the signal review by Folkins and Sime (1981), the next 15 years produced a further 90 reviews (see Gauvin and Spence 1996) concerning the relationship between physical activity and 'psychological wellbeing'; and that was 20 years ago. Conservatively, the number of reviews available today likely exceeds 200 and the number of relevant articles many thousands.

No one can critically process such a collection, so there are two alternatives. One is to conduct some form of meta-analysis. These have become popular devices due to their reach. However, they generally produce a grey mélange for two reasons. First, they almost inevitably combine a wide range dependent variables under some heading such as 'mental wellbeing' (Windle et al. 2010) on the false assumption that such variables are comparable. Second, such reviews lack critical analysis of individual articles. This is a crucial limitation. If an article contains just one methodologically fatal flaw it should be dismissed, not included in an average. If, on the other hand, an excellent article reports a result

that is subsequently replicated, this result should be championed over mediocre others.

In this spirit of valid appraisal there is another approach, which is the critical narrative review. Here the author makes no attempt to read everything, but rather to sample the literature, carefully process each article, and then to construct a coherent account in synthesis. The choice of articles in such an exercise is important. Guidance in selection can come from the number of citations a sourced article has received and from bibliographic tracking. While both techniques identify articles that have been found useful to previous authors, they do bias the selection of older articles. Thus, supplementary contemporary articles are also required. Finally, important leads can be followed. If an author identifies a unique theoretical or empirical contribution, this can be pursued and critiqued.

The question of how many papers are sufficient to form a critical narrative review cannot be answered with certainty. However, the law of diminishing returns provides decisional assistance. At the point where additional articles are simply adding bulk and detail to an existing story, with no advantage to understanding, enough has been read. This decision will be most easily achieved if the author is testing a specific hypothesis.

The hypothesis tested by this review is that there is no direct link between physical activity and subjective wellbeing (SWB). The rationale is based in homeostasis theory. As will be explained, this theory proposes a management system for SWB which could not easily accommodate direct influences from muscular activity. First, however, the historical journey of ideas will be described, noting one in particular which has caused great confusion.

## 16.2    A False Theoretical Lead

The earliest known reference to physical health and psychological wellbeing comes from Diogenes of Athens, a writer of Greek tragedy in the late fifth or early fourth century BCE (Suda On Line: Byzantine Lexicography 2016). He wrote "What man is happy? He who has a healthy body, a resourceful mind and a docile nature" (Dorandi 2013). This unremarkable suggestion received little attention. A slight change in the wording, however, had a momentous impact.

Some 500 years later, the Roman poet Juvenal (55 AD – 127 AD) wrote "It is to be prayed that the mind be sound in a sound body". From this has come the phrase 'Mens sana in corpore sano' (A healthy mind in a healthy body), which has been adopted as a motto by numerous elite private schools, sporting clubs, and organizations concerned with physical training (see Wikipedia for a listing). Even though the phrase does not make any causal intention, its popularity is attributable to the common interpretation that physical exercise generates psychological wellbeing. This presumed causal influence has provided a major rationale for imposing exercise on captive populations, such as school children. It also continues to influence some bizarre contemporary assertions, such as physical wellbeing engenders wisdom (Ardelt 2016).

The assumption, of a causal link between physical health and psychological wellbeing, is dangerously intuitive. In the words of Hansen et al. (2001) "Common sense dictates that improved mental health is a natural outcome of exercise (Glenister 1996)" (p.267). It is also prejudicial. Likely since the dawn of theatre, the hero is cast as physically commanding and the villain as physically inferior. Such depictions reflect genetic influence, with such perceptual biases assisting the choice of mate or leader.

These ancient programs have served humanity well, but are now beyond their use-by date. They not only causes unwarranted prejudicial attitudes but also impede understanding of the true relationship between physical prowess and psychological wellbeing. Also impeding understanding is a large industry based on the presumption that exercise is a panacea. For example, Haskell et al. (2007b) report recommendations from the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association. While their recommendations are clearly aimed at physical health, this report also claims "physical activity … is associated with enhanced health and quality of

life" (p.1082). They also cite a government report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2005) claiming that people should "Engage in regular physical activity … to promote health, psychological well-being" (p.1088). Neither 'quality of life' nor 'psychological well-being' are defined. However, these references permit other authors citing this report to claim "The benefits of physical activity in terms of … quality of life are well known" Littman et al. (2010, p. 119), thus perpetuating the belief.

So, is there really a direct link between good physical functioning and psychological wellbeing? One of the major impediments to addressing this question is the use of ambiguous terms without definition. In the text that follows, the following definitions will apply.

## 16.3 Definitions

### 16.3.1 Definition of Physical Activity

The following definition is generally well considered and will be adopted here:

"Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure. … Exercise is a subset of physical activity that is planned, structured, and repetitive and has as a final or an intermediate objective the improvement or maintenance of physical fitness" (Caspersen et al. 1985, p. 126).

### 16.3.2 Definition of Subjective Wellbeing

There is no universally agreed definition of subjective wellbeing (SWB). As a consequence, the massive literature on this topic is replete with inconsistencies caused by low-grade congruence between nomenclature and the intended construct (Cummins 2014; Diener 2006).

For the purpose of this paper, SWB will be used to refer to an abstracted evaluation of one's own life. In operational terms, this definition applies to a group of measures that share the fol-

lowing characteristics: (a) They are single factor scales; (b) The scale items are positive self-reports of satisfaction or happiness to personally-relevant, semi-abstract questions; (c) The scales generally inter-correlate at >.6 (Casas et al. 2009; Renn et al. 2009; van Beuningen 2012).

The most widely used such measure is a single item of satisfaction with 'life as a whole', termed General Life satisfaction (GLS) (Andrews and Withey 1976). Two other widely-used scales are the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al. 1985) and the Personal Wellbeing Index (International Wellbeing Group 2013). Excluded from consideration are scales that combine positive and negative items, such as the Vitality subscale of the SF-36 (Ware et al. 1993) and Profile of Mood States (McNair et al. 1971) full-scale, with the exception of the Vigor sub-scale (Lively, Active, Energetic, Cheerful, Alert, Full of pep, Carefree, Vigorous). Additionally, because SWB mainly comprises positive affect (Davern et al. 2007), single-item measures of positive affect are also included under SWB. Such measures correlate >.6 with the scales mentioned above.

### 16.3.3 Definition of Health-Related Quality of Life

Research on physical activity is often set within a medical context. It is therefore necessary to also define the medical version of life quality, called Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL). Even through HRQOL measurement is also by self-report, it is very different from SWB.

An excellent level of HRQOL represents the absence of pathology as reported by the patient. Thus, it has been suggested, HRQOL may be used "As a clinical trial end point … with a value equal to disease-free survival" (Cella et al. 1993a, p. 570). This focus on pathology represents a severe limitation to the usefulness of such scales in non-pathological samples. Whereas SWB can represent either a low or high perceived life quality, HRQOL scales can only represent a low to neutral (normal) life quality.

A second reason to avoid the use of HRQOL scales, in studies of the relationship between

QOL and physical activity, is that many incorporate items relating to levels of physical activity. For example, the most widely used HRQOL instrument is the SF-36 (McHorney et al. 1993). This includes such items as 'limitations in ability to walk 100 meters'. There is, therefore, a clear confound if such measures of life quality are correlated with levels of activity. In summary, for both of these reasons, HRQOL measures will not be further considered for this discussion.

## 16.4    Theoretical Explanations

The proposition of a link between physical activity and subjective wellbeing (SWB) requires a plausible theoretical explanation. Presumably, such a link has a genetic basis, being selected because it serves an adaptive biological or psychological purpose.

Consideration of such linkages can be dichotomized into direct and indirect. In a direct linkage, muscular activity itself would influence SWB. In an indirect linkage, the movement resulting from muscular activity would achieve some purpose linked to SWB.

## 16.5    Direct Linkages

A number of authors have noted the absence of a reasonable theoretical basis for the proposed connection between muscular action and feelings of wellbeing (e.g., Hansen et al. 2001). This absence, however, has not deterred numerous researchers from seeking an empirical relationship between activity-generated neurological changes and SWB.

## 16.6    Muscles, Neurobiology and SWB

In its purest form, the link between physical activity and SWB is through energy expenditure. That is, in some manner so far undescribed, pure muscular activity, of itself, causes a positive change in SWB. This not only sounds unlikely, it

is also theoretically and empirically unsupported. Over 20 years ago, Gauvin and Spence (1996), in their authoritative review, declared there was no consensus concerning an underlying physiological mechanism linking exercise with SWB, and this remains true today. If there was such a link, then different kinds and levels of exercise should yield differential effects on SWB. The evidence is to the contrary. For example, McAuley et al. (2000) found a rise in SWB following group exercise did not distinguish between aerobic and stretching exercise.

Not only does there appear to be an absence of reliable evidence that neuro-muscular activity has a direct link to SWB, but also there are good reasons to suspect such a link does not exist. Some of these reasons are as follows:

1. No one seems to have explained why it would be adaptive to link muscular activity with SWB. In fact, it would be mal-adaptive. Since energy in feral populations is an essential resource, usually in short supply, it makes no sense to expend energy simply to raise SWB. Muscular activity is most adaptive when linked to survival behavior, not to keeping people feeling good.
2. A fundamental truism is that SWB correlates poorly with objective indicators (Andrews and Withey 1976). The reason is explained by homeostasis theory (see later) and the confirming evidence in terms of physical activity is consistent. For example, while Tuson et al. (1995) found a solid relationship between the perceived intensity of exercise and positive affect (see Theory of Optimal Stimulation), they found no relationship with exercise intensity measured objectively by oxygen consumption.
3. An increased level of physical activity is reflected in changed levels of multiple systems as the body reacts to meet the demands, both metabolic and psychological, imposed by the activity. Thus, presented with such a diversity of changes, researchers have an excellent probability of detecting correlations between specific biological and psychological variables which are changing together. This

does not mean the changes are causally related to one another. For example, the increased need to expel carbon dioxide and an increased sense of 'vigor' may well be co-incident with exercise. But causing someone to breathe high levels of carbon dioxide does not make them feel vigorous, it makes them feel stressed. Correlation does not equal causation.

4. The basic neurological elements, such as the neurotransmitters dopamine, norepinephrine, etc., are involved in such a diversity of neurological systems and tasks that determining their specific role linking SWB to exercise, even if it exists, is most unlikely to be simple. Moreover, even if a specific biochemical substance was found to perform this role, it would be unlikely to answer the question of how and why participation in a chosen activity enhances SWB, while enforced and meaningless activity does not.

    There have also been false-leads in this quest for neurotransmitter causality. For example, the endogenous opioid peptides were claimed to be causal in raising positive affect. However, attempts to correlate plasma endorphin levels with mood improvement have been unsuccessful (Kirkcaldy and Shephard 1990; Yeung 1996). While endorphins are involved in short-term affective changes associated with heroic forms of exercise, there is no reliable evidence they are implicated in chronic levels of SWB.

6. Other false leads in relation to the normal exercise-SWB relationship are created by pathological functioning. Wherever a body system is operating at a pathological level, the pathology is likely to reduce both the normal level of physical activity as well as reducing SWB. Thus, the correlation has arisen as a consequence of the pathology. But such correlations do not simply transfer to normal functioning.

A similar logic applies to correlations arising from the application of physiological remedial techniques. For example, high muscle tension may well be linked to low SWB. If so, then it may well be possible to increase SWB through teaching muscle relaxation. This, however, does not imply that SWB is normally mediated by muscle tension.

In summary, the many biological variables that have been used to link SWB and exercise have not been shown useful for understanding. The implication seems clear. In order to understand the mechanisms of normal functioning by which physical activity and SWB are related, the answers are most likely to be found within psychological processes.

## 16.7 Activity Theory and Disengagement Theory

A different form of direct link between physical activity and life quality was proposed almost 70 years ago by the sociologist Ruth Cavan and colleagues. They had noted great heterogeneity in life quality of elderly people. They also observed that those who were 'aging well' were also the most active. So 'Activity Theory' was proposed to account for the link. About a decade later, Disengagement Theory (Cumming and Henry 1961) provided an alternative and more elaborate explanation, centered around progressive, age-dependent, social withdrawal.

Both theories generated much research interest and neither survived the welter of critique that was heaped upon them. It is instructive to consider why they were discredited.

Their first weakness is a failure to clearly define 'activity'. Within activity theory, their measurement instrument, the Chicago Inventory of Activity and Attitudes (Cavan et al. 1949), provides an overly broad, objective view. Included are leisure-time activities, religious activities, intimate social activities, economic activities, and health. So in this scheme, an 'activity' is almost anything that the person does physically. The definition of activity within disengagement theory is restricted to social engagement, measured through the number of social roles, the variation of those roles, and the frequency of interaction. Thus, while each theory rests on a quite different set of theoretical expectations, both are restricted to objective measures. As has

already been mentioned, these are generally poorly connected to SWB.

The second weakness is a lack of empirical support. For example, the proposition that 'activity' levels universally decrease after 65 years of age is not usually true for either general activity (e.g., Palmore 1968) or social engagement (e.g., Zborowski 1962). Most commonly, people tend to maintain their activity levels past 65 years until inhibited by poor health or other circumstances.

These findings poses a conundrum, not only for the two theories in question, but also for the broader proposition that physical activity and SWB are linked. No one claims that activity levels generally rise after 65 years. Yet there is a systematic and general rise in SWB as people age beyond late-middle age (Cummins et al. 2013). While this observation is inconsistent with a direct activity-SWB link, it has been accounted for by homeostasis theory (Cummins 2016).

In summary, there appears to be no reliable evidence of a direct link between the levels of physical activity and SWB. There is, however, much stronger evidence for an indirect link.

## 16.8    Indirect Linkages

When researchers discuss the connection between SWB and physical activity, the activity is almost always conducted to achieve some purpose. Moreover, the purpose usually involves connection to other people. This may be connection to a partner (housework), to fellow employees (job), to other people with health or appearance concerns (exercise), to people running laboratory studies on activity (the researchers and other participants), or to other players (sport). Crucially, these connections provide opportunities for social engagement and the formation of supportive social networks.

## 16.9    Positive Social Engagement

There is a huge literature demonstrating the correlation between physical activity and positive social engagement. To give just three examples:

Emery and Blumenthal (1990) found that social life was perceived to be improved following either a 16-week aerobic class or a yoga class, when compared to a non-exercise control group. McAuley et al. (2000) report that social relations integral to the exercise environment are significant correlates of SWB in older adults, while Poon and Fung (2008) found a .24 correlation between relational satisfaction and exercise.

The most obvious reason for this link is that purposeful activity increases the probability of positive social engagement (see, Legh-Jones and Moore 2012). This conclusion has been reached by many reviewers (e.g. McAuley and Rudolph 1995; Poon and Fung 2008), with the psychological advantage linked to group cohesiveness (Courneya 1995). The authoritative review by Gauvin and Spence (1996) concludes that while "the data indicate that physical activity, particularly physical activity that unfolds in a social context, is related to higher levels of positive affect" …however, "the data do not clearly show that physical activity is responsible for any of these changes" (pp.S58–S59) …thus, "the causal role of physical activity in its relationship to PWB ['psychological wellbeing'] has not been established" (p.S61). Twenty years on this statement still hold true.

This is of the highest relevance for any consideration linking physical activity and SWB. Meaningful, supportive social relationships are probably the most important element in the maintenance of normal levels of SWB (see homeostasis later). Thus, any research studying SWB and physical activity must ensure that the variance contributed by activity-associated relationships is removed prior to any claim of a SWB-Activity link.

This is not a trivial matter of methodological purity, it is vital to the interpretation of results. If it is found that engaging in Tai-Chi classes increases the SWB of elderly participants, then if the result is dominantly caused by enhanced social contact, the nature of the advice to facility managers must reflect this. There are many ways to engineer social interaction other than through shared exercise, and some of these may well be preferred by the people themselves.

So, what other indirect effects on SWB can be theoretically linked to meaningful physical activity?

## 16.10 Building Resilience

The proposition that activity builds resilience, proposed by Kahana and Kahana (1996), is attractive. They propose that, since normative stressors threaten the SWB of elderly people, maintaining physical activity can buffer the ill effects and even serve preventive functions. In a review of their own work they conclude "Common to all of these formulations is the recognition that older people can and must be active and proactive if they are to age successfully" (Kahana and Kahana 2003, p. 226).

Unfortunately, this conclusion can be challenged from their own data. Kahana et al. (2002) report that, in an 8-year longitudinal study of elderly people in the USA, the level of exercise at baseline correlated 0.11 with positive affect measured 8 years later, after being adjusted for sociodemographic characteristics, baseline measure of positive affect, and baseline measure of subjective and objective health. In other words, the prior exercise levels predicted one percent of the variance in later SWB.

## 16.11 Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy

Self-esteem correlates very strongly with SWB. Thus, some authors, such as Poon and Fung (2008), have proposed that improving perceived physical ability, enhances self-esteem, and thereby promotes SWB. However, their own study among older adults in Hong Kong, found a .04 correlation between self-esteem and their measure of exercise. Moreover, in their review, Stewart and King (1991) note that "results from the better-controlled studies indicate little improvement [in self-esteem] with exercise" (p.113).

In a similar vein, some authors (e.g., Phillips and McAuley 2013) have used the frame of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura 2004), to proposed that physical activity supports the development of self-efficacy, and thereby supports SWB. However, they acknowledge that Bandura did not address his theory to physical activity, they fail to explain their reasoning in simple terms and, in terms of empirical support, provide only complex interactional results. In the absence of either simple hypotheses or results, the idea that activity boosts SWB via self-esteem or self-efficacy cannot be considered a reasonable claim.

## 16.12 Stress Reduction

It has been commonly reported that exercise decreases depression, anxiety and stress (e.g., Taylor et al. 1985). It has therefore been hypothesized by Estivill (1995) that exercise provides temporary relief from daily stress and that depression is replaced by a pleasant and calm state of awareness similar to that found in spiritual practices. While this may be so, it does not explain why SWB and exercise should be related in non-pathological circumstances. The methodological issue of dealing with pathological samples has already been discussed.

## 16.13 Expectancy-Placebo Effect

Other authors have proposed that increased SWB following exercise may be a consequence of expectation: A placebo effect, where people expect to experience heightened SWB. A good definition of placebo has been provided by Shapiro and Shapiro (1984) as "any therapy or component of therapy that is deliberately used for its nonspecific, psychological, or psychophysiological effect, or that is used for its presumed specific effect but is without specific activity for the condition being treated" (p. 372).

An excellent demonstration of placebo power in the context of exercise has been provided by Desharnais et al. (1993). They employed a 10 week × 3 times per week × 90 mins exercise routines, arranged in groups, involving games and shared activities. One group (E) was informed by enthusiastic exercise leaders that their training program was designed to improve both aerobic

capacity and psychological well-being. The other group (C) told only about aerobic capacity. Their dependent variable was self-esteem. At baseline the E<C (71.07 vs 72.7: −1.0 points) and at 10 weeks E>C (84.1 vs 77.3: +6.8 points). Only the E significantly improved over its baseline. This is pretty convincing in terms of an expectancy effect, since the increase is far larger than the difference at baseline. Whether the same effect would be produced for SWB remains to be demonstrated.

## 16.14 Homeostasis Theory

The Homeostasis Theory of Subjective Wellbeing proposes that life satisfaction, positive affect, and other measures of subjective wellbeing (SWB) are held under homeostatic control. That is, they are not simply free to vary when good or bad experiences are perceived. Rather, SWB levels are normally maintained within a narrow range of values, around a set-point for each person (Capic et al. 2017; Cummins et al. 2014). The analogy with core body temperature homeostasis is apposite. Such temperature is normally maintained very close to 37 °C, despite experiencing different air temperatures at the skin surface and body heat generated through physical activity. In the case of SWB, however, instead of regulation through the autonomic system, management occurs through various psychological and neurological devices. But the general aim of both systems is the same: to maintain the measured variable within a narrowly defined, genetically determined range.

The character of SWB, as this managed variable, has been a contentious issue. Since the early work of Campbell et al. (1976), it has been generally agreed that SWB comprises some mixture of affect and cognition. However, whether as claimed by Diener et al. (2004) SWB represents a dominantly cognitive evaluation, is certainly moot. To the contrary, a substantial body of more recent research now attests to the essence of SWB being positive-activated affect (Blore et al. 2011; Davern et al. 2007; Longo 2015; Tomyn and Cummins 2011). The key three affects are

content, happy, and alert, and in combination are called Homeostatically Protected Mood (HPMood). This nomenclature indicates the theoretical proposition, that the level of HPMood is a genetically determined, individual difference, and that its natural level for each person is Homeostatically defended around their set-point.

One consequence of homeostatic defense is high stability in the normal level of experienced mood and, therefore, of SWB. The presence of such a narrow range of values has been amply demonstrated for SWB (Anglim et al. 2015; Cummins 1995, 1998), and has the important consequence that SWB pathology can be recognized by outlying values. This property will be elaborated in relation to the evaluation of the empirical studies described later.

A second important application of SWB homeostasis theory is to provide an explanation of the generally low correlation between variables representing objective and subjective quality of life, such as physical strength and SWB. The reason for this disconnection is that the very purpose of homeostasis is to prevent such relationships. Even if there is a weak positive advantage to SWB by being physically strong, this advantage is manifest as an increased resilience to challenging environments, rather than an increased level of SWB.

Expanding the understanding of homeostasis, Cummins and Nistico (2002) proposed that SWB is protected in part by three psychological buffers: self-satisfaction or self-esteem, optimism, and perceived control. Of these, perceived control seems to offer a simple connection between physical activity and SWB. In his review of control-related motivational constructs, Biddle (1999) draws the sensible conclusion that the benefits of exercise are linked to the extent to which the activity provides a sense of control and is, therefore, enjoyable. This straight-forward connection jells with other research showing that enjoyment of sport and exercise is intimately linked to gaining a sense of personal control (Wankel and Kreisel 1985), and that individualized programs optimize the benefit (Tuson et al. 1995; Van Andel and Austin 1984). However,

perceived control is a homeostatic buffer, not a SWB generator. Thus, its effect on SWB is indirect, conferring resilience.

In summary it seems clear that, just as physical activity is associated with numerous changes in neurological systems, physical activity also associates with many changed psychological conditions. While none of these associations, as yet, provide a simple link between the activity and SWB, the indirect psychological effects seem to hold promise. For this understanding to be realized, however, a new literature is required, unfettered by poor methodology.

## 16.15   Methodological Pitfalls

As has been noted by the many reviewers of this literature, a great majority of papers concerning the link between SWB and physical activity contain major methodological and logical flaws. These flaws are frequently important enough to invalidate the conclusions which appear in abstracts. The major sources of these errors are as follows.

## 16.16   The Optimal Level of Physical Activity

A common belief, usually implicit, is that exercise is good and more is better. The reality is rather different. While some forms of exercise, appropriately engaged, with the right degree of intensity, are good for some purposes, other forms and intensities of exercise are bad for both physical health and SWB. For example, involuntary exercise is used as a form of punishment (e.g. prisoners breaking rocks), physical over-exertion can damage muscles, while the wrong form of exercise can damage joints. Even the expertly supervised training of elite athletes can be physically and psychologically damaging (for a review see Tofler et al. 1996). Apart from their higher risk the of developing musculo-skeletal disorders, elite athletes are also at higher risk of developing eating disorders and a variety of psychological problems associated with single-

minded devotion to grueling training schedules. Children may be especially vulnerable in this regard. The message is simple. Just as it is for every other potentially positive aspect of life, more is not better.

A sensible theoretical approach to the question of how much physical activity is good for SWB does not rest on measures of physiological performance, but on how people feel., The Theory of Optimal Stimulation proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1982) is a general conception, which can be usefully applied here. It proposes that optimal experience occurs when there is a match between the challenges faced and one's skills. At the point of this match people experience feelings of interest, enjoyment, and mastery. Applying this to physical activity, if the level of perceived challenge overwhelms capability, the results will be stress or anxiety. If the challenge places too little demand on capability, then boredom or disinterest will result.

This notion was tested in a well-designed study by Tuson et al. (1995). They propose that, in order to predict a positive change in affect following exercise, consideration must be given to initial level of positive affect (i.e. law of initial values). If someone has a high initial level of positive affect, then an increase following exercise is not expected to occur since there is little room for change (i.e., ceiling effect). Moreover, low initial positive affect followed by exercise perceived to be either very light (low interest) or very intense (aversive) is not expected to change affect either. In order for exercise to raise positive affect, the person must have an initial level of affect that is mid-range or low for that individual, and the exercise must be perceived by them as desirable, challenging, and within their capability.

In confirmation, the authors found that a significant increase in positive affect only occurred for participants with low initial levels, who exercise at an intensity perceived to be moderate. They also found a significant decrease in positive affect for participants with a high initial levels who exercised at intensities perceived to be either light or intense. All of this is also quite consistent with homeostasis theory.

## 16.17  The Vexed Issue of Causality

What form, type, frequency, and intensity of exercise is enhancing to positive feelings about one's self? The answer is not simple to find and the literature is plagued by misrepresentations of causality. For example, in the abstract to his review, Fox (2000) claims the existence of "over 30 published narrative or meta-analytic reviews of research into *the effect of exercise on* constructs such as … affect and mood… (p.4). In addition, Kim et al. (2016) state "It has been well-documented that leisure-time physical activity engagement *promotes* health and well-being among older adults" (p.461). Łabudzki and Tasiemski (2013) claim "Physical Activity *increases* the subjective quality of life in blind and visually impaired individuals" (p.210). In fact very little, if any, of the evidence cited in these publications can be used to infer direct causality.

Most of the studies cited as evidence by the above reviewers are cross-sectional and, as has already been noted, such studies do not allow the determination of causality. Causation can only be inferred with trepidation from longitudinal surveys, and with some degree of certainty using longitudinal experimental studies where key confounding variables have been controlled. None of the studies cited in this review fulfill the latter condition.

## 16.18  Normality vs Pathology

Adding to this problem of attribution is the crucial distinction between normal and pathological functioning. If a sample contains a mixture of normally functioning people and people with severe depression, then the level of physical activity will be lower in the people with depression, as will also their levels of SWB, positive affect, etc. So, a simple correlational study (e.g., Evangelista et al. 2016) using such a mixed sample will reveal a significant correlation between activity and SWB, most likely caused by abnormally low activity of the people with depression. This does not inform the link between activity and SWB in people with no pathology.

## 16.19  Exercise vs Total Physical Activity

A strange illogicality in much of this literature is the tendency to report 'exercise levels' as though they have a quite different association with 'well-being' from the physical activity people experience in the course of their normal day. The idea that a bricklayer or single mother of twins needs additional physical activity to improve their well-being is distinctly odd. Yet such thinking is commonplace within this literature. For example, under the heading 'Health Behaviors and Risk Factors', the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2016) reports that people living in rural areas exercise less that people living in cities (p.250). The implication is that farmers who are physically active all day can reduce their health risk by engaging in more exercise.

This problem is ignored by many reviewers of this literature. Consider, for example, the meta-analysis on the "effect of exercise or physical activity interventions" (p.274) on 'psychological wellbeing' reported by Netz et al. (2005). For the purpose of their analysis, they carefully classify the levels and types of controlled activity used by the various researchers, but ignore the levels of physical activity engaged in by the participants outside the study. This omission has the potential to seriously interfere with their conclusions.

## 16.20  Measures of Physical Activity

The three measures listed below are not intended to be representative of research in this area, they are simply the three scales that were used in the research reports accessed for this review. All three, however, appear inadequate to provide reliable and valid data that are free of social influences. They are as follows:

The first scale is un-named, contained in a report by Kim et al. (2016) who report a 'benefit' (causal) relationship between SWB (Diener et al. 1985) and 'leisure-time physical activity'. While this latter term is used in both the title of their paper and the abstract, their Method section

refers to it as 'leisure-time physical activity involvement', which adds a social dimension. The scale is unvalidated. It comprises four items, one of which is 'often attend sports/social/club'. This clearly confounds physical activity with social activity.

The Yale Physical Activity Scale (DiPietro et al. 1993) is a self-report 31-item scale with five domains; housework, yard work, caretaking, exercise, and recreational activities. It records the amount of time and energy (in Kcal) older adults spent on various activities in a typical week in the past month. However, the domains have not been verified by factor analysis, many items involve social activities, and the test-retest correlations for some items are reported as .42. This is too low to be considered reliable.

The Seven-Day Physical Activity Recall (American College of Sports Medicine 1997) – Adapted (Gross et al. 2002), is a self-report, seven-day recall of activities classified in terms of energy expenditure as light, moderate, hard, or very hard. Ramírez-Marrero et al. (2004) report a test-retest correlation of .60, however many of the items include social activity.

In summary, none of these three scales can be considered a valid measure of physical activity for the purpose of seeking correlations with SWB. All measures confound levels of social activity and physical activity. In addition, the psychometric basis for each scale is poorly described.

## 16.21  Empirical Evidence for a Physical Activity – SWB Link

The studies listed below are indicative only, being all of the relevant reports located for this review. They have been selected by chance, from the reference lists of other authors, with no more than one taken from any single reference list. Thus, they do not represent any pre-determined selection criterion. In this spirit, they represent a reasonable guide to the state of this empirical literature on this topic. All empirical results have been converted into a standard 0–100 point scale (for the method see section 5.2: International Wellbeing Group 2013). The studies in each section are listed chronologically.

## 16.22  Positive Evidence for a Physical Activity – SWB Link

Peppers (1976). *Participants*: USA retirees, N = 206. *DV (Dependent Variable)*: LSI-A (Neugarten et al. 1961). *Method*: The sample was split into four groups. *Results*: Vigorous-active-social (79.19 points); Vigorous-active-isolate (68.6); Sedentary-social (66.8); Sedentary-isolate (52.7).

*Comment* This is a nice demonstration of the strong interaction between exercise and social engagement. It is notable that: (a) Vigorous-active-social is at the top of the normal range. It is also higher than Vigorous-active-isolate, showing the power of social connection; (b) There is no statistical difference between Vigorous-active-isolate and Sedentary-social; (c) Sedentary-isolate is pathologically low.

Morgan et al. (1991). *Participants*: England, retired, N = 1042. *DV*: LSI-Z (Wood et al. 1969). *Method*: Questioned about their every-day activities. *Result*: significant positive correlations between LSI-Z and the level of everyday activity.

*Comment* The authors note that "many of the significant correlations between activity and LSI-Z scores … arise not because participation in these activities directly influences morale, but because many of these activities serve, indirectly, as indices of other higher-order factors [which include social factors]" (p.412).

DiLorenzo et al. (1999). *Participants:* healthy young adults not involved in an exercise program, N = 82. Wait-list control group, N = 29. *DV*: Profile of Mood States –Vigor (McNair et al. 1992). *Method*: A 12 weeks aerobic fitness

program using bicycle ergometers, with participants exercising together in the same environment and being continuously monitored by staff to ensure a prescribed level of exercise was maintained. *Result*: Significant rise from baseline (33.2 points) to end of intervention (50.13), which was significant at both the 3 months (44.45) and 12 months (42.70) follow-up.

*Comment* Vigor was raised and maintained higher 12 months after the intervention, but the result is socially contaminated.

Gauvin et al. (2000). *Participants*: physically active women recruited from local YMCAs, N = 84. *DV:* Exercise-Induced Feeling Inventory (Gauvin and Rejeski 1993), subscales of positive engagement (enthusiastic, up-beat, happy) and tranquility (calm, peaceful, relaxed). *Method:* Experience sampling via a pager plus before and after an acute 20+ min bout of vigorous physical activity. *Result:* Means not provided. The authors report higher scores for positive engagement and tranquility following exercise, and also higher on days involving exercise compared with non-exercise days. The activity was likely conducted in a YMCA.

*Comment* It is apparent that this self-motivated, vigorous exercise raised positive affect in the period following the activity. The extent to which the exercise involved social engagement is not known, but seems likely.

McAuley et al. (2000). *Participants*: sedentary, healthy, elderly, N = 174, randomized into one of two groups. *DV*: Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al. 1985), loneliness, and social support. *Method*: Either an aerobic activity group or a stretching and toning group, three sessions per week for 6 months. *Result*: Baseline 67.73 points, 6 months 73.40 (+5.67), 6 months follow-up 64.70. There was no difference between the two intervention groups. The authors conclude "vigorous physical activity is not necessary for health benefits" (p.614). Social engagement and the frequency of exercise combined to link most strongly with increased SWB.

*Comment* The result is transitory and socially contaminated.

Kahana et al. (2002). *Participants*: USA elderly at 72 + y and 8 years later (80 + y). At 8 years, these people (N = 357) were the survivors from 1000 people at baseline. *DV*: Activated positive affect using the PANAS (Watson et al. 1988) *Method*: The passage of 8 years. *Result*: These survivors had higher positive affect at baseline (57.5 points) than the whole sample (53.9), and their positive affect significantly decreased over the 8 years (57.5–56.1) along with their health. The survivors exercised more at baseline than the whole sample. Exercise at baseline was associated with higher positive affect at both baseline and at 8y, and remained so after adjusting for health conditions at baseline (p < .025). They did not measure exercise at follow-up. They conclude this shows the 'benefits' of exercise.

*Comment* These PANAS values are extremely low, showing a high degree of pathology. This is likely why exercise and positive affect correlated at baseline. Exercise was self-reported 'how often they participated in sports or other exercise activities' – this would almost certainly have involved social contact.

Ramírez-Marrero et al. (2004). *Participants*: HIV-positive people, N = 68. *DV*: Life Satisfaction Index -Z (Neugarten et al. 1961). *Method*: participants were divided into two groups dependent on their self-reported level of physical activity using the Seven-Day Physical Activity Recall (American College of Sports Medicine 1997). *Result*: more active 70.8 points, less active 57.5.

*Comment* The difference likely reflects the level of experienced pathology.

Pinto and Trunzo (2004). *Participants*: 40 women who reported regular physical activity (N = 40) and 79 sedentary women (N = 79). *DV*: Vigor sub-scale of the POMS (McNair et al. 1971). *Method*: participants were early-stage breast cancer survivors. *Result*: women who self-reported as sedentary (moderate exercise <2 times

per week for 30 minutes per session), were physically less fit and had lower vigor, after controlling for BMI, employment and income.

*Comment*  It seem likely that the lack of feeling vigorous caused them to be less active.

Heller et al. (2004) *Participants*: People with Down syndrome N = 53. *DV*: The Life satisfaction Scale (Heller et al. 1996). *Method*: exercise and training program over 12 weeks (N = 32), passive control (N = 21). The exercise was highly social, in classes, with one staff member supervisor for every three people. *Results*: The exercise group increased (81.58–86.84 points), the passive control group decreased (89.47–80.2). They report a significant ANCOVA, but this is due to the significant post-program comparison (86.84 vs. 80.2, p < .05) caused by the decreasing control group. These scores are, in any event, too high [normative ceiling is around 80 points], likely signaling poor response validity. Test-retest reliability was .60.

*Comment*  The exercise had a strong social component, the results are unreliable, and may be invalid.

Ku et al. (2016) *Participants*: Elderly people, N = 295. *DV*: Activity measured by accelerometer activity as kilocalories expended. This was only measured at baseline. Their measure of 'subjective wellbeing' is, in fact, a mélange of positive and negative variables concerning freedom from illness and financial concerns, to obscure constructs such as 'self-growth'. They fail to confirm either the factor structure or validity, such that the results from this scale cannot be simply interpreted. *Method*: an 18 months follow-up. *Results*: Their findings are weak, with the regression of activity at baseline on 'wellbeing' at follow-up being β.18. Their measure of SWB did not distinguish reliably between baseline levels of 'moderate-vigorous' and 'light' physical activity.

*Comment*  Their claim that 'physical activity was associated with higher levels of subjective wellbeing' cannot be considered reliable.

**Summary**  These ten reports show a positive connection between voluntary physical activity conducted in a social environment, and SWB. However, not one of these studies shows physical activity, of itself, capable of raising SWB beyond the level associated with sedentary social activity. Given the consistency of this result, it is regrettable that the listed contemporary researchers did not take steps to separate the activity from the social effects of exercise.

## 16.23  Negative Evidence

Hansen et al. (2001). *Participants*: College students, N = 14. *DV*: Profile of Mood States –Vigor (McNair et al. 1992). *Method*: Stationary bicycle exercise, where participants performed alone. *Result*: They found no 'dose effect' of exercise duration, in that vigor rose from baseline after 10 minutes and showed no further change in separate trials lasting 20 or 30 minutes.

*Comment*  It seems reasonable that feelings of vigor rise during exercise.

Gross et al. (2002). *Participants*: women after a cancer operation, N = 27. *DV*: The authors' own Seven-Day Physical Activity Recall–Adapted scale with the subscales of vigor (POMS: McNair et al. 1992). *Method*: a cross-sectional study. *Result*: The activity-vigor association was significant only if the people performing light activity were excluded.

*Comment*  (a) The women were required to provide retrospective data over the past 7-days, classifying each day into minutes and hours spent in light, moderate, hard, and very hard activity. It is most unlikely such data are reliable. (b) They found no correlation between Bone Mineral Density (BMD) and level of activity. This was a generally sedentary group considered at-risk of osteoporosis, so this lack of association is hard to explain if the activity measure is valid.

Pinto et al. (2002). *Participants*: women who had completed treatment for cancer, N = 69. *DV*:

the vigor subscale of the POMS (McNair et al. 1992). *Method*: A 12-month prospective longitudinal study. *Result*: controlling for baseline values, exercise participation was unrelated to vigor.

Netz et al. (2005). Report a meta-analysis of the effects of exercise on non-pathological older-adults. *Result*: (a) Exercise vs no or low exercise showed no differential effect on either life satisfaction or positive affect; (b) There was no 'exercise dose' effect on either measure. *Author's conclusion:* "the absence of exercise effects on life satisfaction in a population without clinical disorders may result from a relatively high level of life satisfaction … and the lack of sufficient [measurement] sensitivity" (p.281).

*Comment* (1) Their selection of studies is based on levels of exercise, yet the authors interpret their results in terms of 'physical activity'. (2) They fail to define either positive affect or life satisfaction.

McAuley et al. (2006). *Participants*: A normal sample of elderly Americans, N = 249. *DV*: Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al. 1985), the Physical Activity Scale for the Elderly (Washburn et al. 1993), and the Community Healthy Activities Model Program for Seniors physical activity measure (Stewart et al. 2001). *Result*: Structural modeling showed that the relationships between physical activity and SWB were all indirect. The authors conclude their results support a 'social cognitive model' of the SWB-activity relationship.

**Summary** These five negative reports are generally not very informative, with the exception of McAuley et al. (2006). This more sophisticated study supports the view that the major active ingredient in the activity-SWB correlations is facilitated social engagement.

## 16.24 Conclusions

Over 20 years ago, the authors of an authoritative review concluded "the value of physical activity for the enhancement of Personal Well-Being has been overstated in certain milieus such that unrealistic beliefs currently prevail" (Gauvin and Spence 1996, p. S61). It is disappointing that so little has changed.

Not only do these unrealistic beliefs continue to prevail but too few voices are speaking against them. As revealed in this review, there is a continued absence of reliable evidence showing a direct link between physical activity and subjective wellbeing (SWB). Indeed, homeostasis theory predicts that a direct link between objective physical activity and subjective wellbeing would be seriously maladaptive.

There is, on the other hand, abundant evidence for indirect links whereby, for example, physical activity promotes social contact, and the subjective experience of feeling connected promotes SWB management. This approach is surely the sign-posted track to advance understanding. It involves research with a focus on psychological theory, which employs subjective measures of activity experience, and explores alternative forms of activity in the quest to enhance subjective wellbeing.

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# Relationship Between Physical Activity, Health and Quality of Life from the Perspective of the Hippocratic Theory

Walter N. Toscano

**Abstract**

The place assigned to physical activity within the Hippocratic concept of *díaita* (diet) reflects the significance of the subjects' behavior through time; moreover, that their attitudes have always been based on the practice of games and sports – clear indicators of the life styles of the different ancient cultures.

According to the Hippocratic Theory, every human being's *díaita* consisted of five components, namely: nutrition (food and drinks); physical exercise (gymnastics, outings, rest, baths); professional and social activity; characteristics of the place they lived in (geography and climate); and the changes of *phýsis* determined by age, sex, customs, and the varying complexions of the body. This implies that the implementation of a diet required a life-style assessment which – faced with the impossibility of modifying the subjects' place of residence or profession – had to be limited to working on their own nutrition, physical exercise, and features.

A glance at today's studies on quality of life reveals that the latter not only include indicators related to sports and physical activity, but also consider these practices of the utmost importance. It ought to be made clear that our concept of quality of life implies the citizens' participation in the assessment of their concerns, thus contributing to their own well-being – from a physical-psychological perspective – relating their material and socio-affective needs.

In this presentation we shall approach physical activity related with health in terms of a theoretical proposition of quality of life, as a multidimensional concept that includes the subjects' perceptions of their own lives. This task will require an inter-discipline multi-faced approach, as well as contextualization of our analysis of quality of life – from a Hippocratic perspective, i.e. including climate, geography, economic and political conditions, in the study of each of the subjects. In this regard, and though twenty five centuries have gone by, we may assert that the Hippocratic Theory is still as updated as it was then.

## 17.1 Physical Exercise in Ancient Greece (XI–VI Centuries B.C.)

The practice of physical exercise acquired such a degree of importance in Ancient Greece that there was a progressive proliferation of gymnasiums

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and arenas where athletes were trained in all Greek cities. The importance attached to the beneficial effects of these practices on the human body may be observed in the surveillance progress of physical exercise – which would eventually make a significant contribution to the preservation of health, and generate awareness regarding aspects such as: people's age, their physical condition, the wind, the seasons of the year, individual characteristics, internal and external factors. The figure of *Aliptos* emerged from these practices, i.e. those in charge of training the athletes.

Homer's mythical narratives offer interesting proof of the existence of jousting and sports competitions with the sole purpose of winning prizes – often for altruistic purposes. Since these men's prospects for the future offered much ambiguity and few consolations, they were inclined towards the ideal value, *areté*, not merely as a moral virtue but as the knightly masculine virtues of aristocratic standing and heroic feats (Jaeger 1996). Thus, in the Iliad and the Odyssey, he reflects the educational ideals of the time, centered in strength, dexterity, and heroic courage. Besides, *areté* was not limited to Homer's warrior culture, for this value had other implications such as nobility, prudence, and ingenuity. These were the moral norms that characterized the citizens, not only on the battle-field but also in their private and public lives. (Meza Rueda 1999). In that period, physical triumph was extended to all values; it meant achieving triumph for oneself, for the family, and for society as a whole.

In the case of Sparta, the importance attached to physical exercise was not the same in all the cities, for citizens were subject to their cities and to the law. (Jaeger 1996). Thus, the Spartan *areté* was the sense of love and belonging to their country, to a community, and to the State. Gymnastics appears for the first time in military training, aimed at strengthening the body by submitting it to all kinds of ordeals, and preparing it for battle. The practice of sports and physical exercise were a preparation for war. Simple eating habits were enough to keep fit; boxing, wrestling, and pankration hardened the bodies and healed the wounds. In the case of females, they

practiced physical exercise, especially racing, wrestling, swimming, discus and javelin throw. Bodies and souls were modeled for their final destiny: war.

When it came to regarding the human body, the Spartans had a special view, for the training of naked athletes should contemplate certain moral aspects, due to the strong influence of medicine and hygiene. The anointing of their bodies after taking a bath was explained by the fact that Spartans did not take hot baths, so they rubbed their dry bodies with oil after undressing – for they believed this practice to protect their bodies from the sun, regulate sweat, and prevent colds.

According to Marrou (1965), Spartan education had a clearly defined aim: "training" heavy infantry. Moreover, education was solely in the hands of the State. Children were taken into consideration by The Law, even before birth. As soon as they were born, they were presented before a Council of Elders: the only conditions under which the future citizens would be accepted were if they possessed beauty, as well as fit and robust bodies; otherwise, they would be thrown into the pits. In their youth, all the citizens' efforts were centered in military training, i.e. Physical Education, in the first place; yet the practice of athletic sports – hunting, for instance – was no longer related to a noble life-style, but was strictly subordinated to the development of physical strength.

From a pedagogical point of view, we would be showing a limited approach if we were to state that education in Sparta was exclusively limited to military training. Furthermore, Spartans preserved other links to their knightly origins – above all, their taste for and practice of equestrian and athletic sports. Marrou (1965) believes that we know enough about the ostentatious Olympic Games in order to acknowledge the honors achieved by Laconian champions in international competitions. These victories were the result of the athletes' physical qualities, as well as of their trainers' excellent methods. Sports were not exclusively practiced by men – according to records that date back to the first half of the sixth century; moreover, the bronze statuettes

representing young Spartan females in running position, holding the hem of their sports tunics with one hand, can certainly vouch for this.

Physical activity and health did not go hand in hand, for the Spartan education of those times aimed at developing resistance to suffering in youths. Especially as from the age of 12, they would be imposed a rigorous life regimen with a hard and barbaric note which was progressively accentuated. Dressed only in tunics, their heads shaved to the scalp, and bare feet, the children slept on hard bamboo beds, says Marrou (1965). Boys were intentionally underfed and encouraged to steal their food. Moreover, they developed their virility and fighting spirit by hardening them to blows.

It should be pointed out that the Greeks were characterized by their agonistic spirit, which derives from *agon,* fight, a competency which is more definitely observed towards the end of the fourth century. The agonistic life ideal may be summed up in a heroic moral code of honor which reached its height in the glory and prestige acquired amongst the brave (Jover Ruiz 2000)[1]

Between the seventh century B.C. and the fifth century A.C., sports and physical activities gained a high degree of importance that can only be compared to the present times. Nevertheless, this only applied to the highest social classes (aristocracy) since, as revealed through literary and artistic documents, there were marked social differences in the Greek world for only the citizens of high economic standards were able to enjoy the pleasures and benefits that sports had to offer.

In the cases when physical exercises were not practiced for military purposes, they were regarded as recreational, preparing the basis for athletic games which, in 776 B.C., gave birth to the Olympic Games with a simple foot race, and the gradual incorporation of other athletic games such as the stadium race in 648 B.C., the pentathlon double stadium race, the long distance race, boxing and wrestling, pankration, etc.

Sport and spectacle in Greek cities reached its splendor in the sixth century B.C., this being reflected not only in Olympia – in the Games named after it – but also in the splendid Pythic Games of Delphi, the Nemean Games of Nemea, and the Games played on the Isthmus of Corinth. The latter cases were second to the former regarding gymnastics, not inferior though, but different, as in the case of the Spartans who excelled at the Olympic Games – their gymnastics being a tribute to the archaic wisdom of the heroes described by Homer.

Most of the Greek philosophers and physicians have devoted themselves to the athletes' lives – above them all was Hippocrates, the father of medicine – who was not only concerned with their physical exercises and training but also with their diet, thus prescribing the kind of food they ought to ingest in order to increase their strength and, in addition, indicating the way in which they should quench their thirst.

## 17.2   Physical Exercises and Diet in the Hippocratic Theory (Fifth Century B.C.)

It is clear that the word exercise is very often found in the works of Hippocrates, though in most cases it refers to the hygienic aspect of exercise in general (Toscano, 2006), by acknowledging its value in strengthening weak muscles, helping convalescence, and improving mental health.[2] Hippocrates created the Greek medical school and, in his writings, he makes reference to the medical uses that may be given to physical exercise.

Hippocrates emphasized that excessive exercise was harmful, and that it was hard to determine and measure the amount of exercise considered to be convenient for each person. He further admitted the importance of those movements in order to eliminate products which were useless or harmful to the human body, and

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[1] Jover Ruiz, R. (2000) develops this theme in his Doctoral Thesis. *Àéthlos, game, sport, and culture in Homer's agon*. Universidad de Zaragoza, pp. 144–151

[2] Statements on the hygienic value of physical exercises may be found in Hippocratic texts: *On the medical profession* 20; *Epidemics IV* 4,18 y 4,23; *On diets* II 60.

prescribed – like any contemporary sports medicine physician would – a special eating diet according to each season of the year. He studied fatigue and its causes, together with its prophylaxis and treatment, prescribing massage and hydrotherapy. In a word, Hippocrates did what trainers and sports medicine physicians (who study athletes to that end) do today, not merely to obtain new records, but also to do research work on how to keep their health in perfect condition, through harmless exercises that evoke athletic games.

The most overwhelming data regarding Hippocrates' Diet and physical activity date back to Greek culture and to the field of medicine. Thus, the *Hippocratic Treatises* are a perfect example of the significance of the subjects' behavior in the course of time, and that the attitudes they adopted were sustained by and based on games and sports – clear indicators of the life styles of other cultures, different from our own.

The primary notion of Aristotle's concept of *tékhne* (knowledge how, knowledge why or the purpose it serves) is somewhat implicit and, in some cases, almost explicit in the treatises of the Hippocratic Corpus regarding *tékhne iatriké* or art of healing. In the treatise *On Ancient Medicine*, which expounds the programmatic principles of medical science – its concept, means, and ends -, while defending it from its detractors (who went to the extent of denying its existence), it is possible to find several allusions to physical exercise as part of the human being's life regimen, oriented to securing health and body wellness.[3]

According to the author of this work, medicine emerged from men's need to prevent the illnesses afflicting their bodies – its origins being found in their problematic adaptation to the difficult conditions of the environment in which they lived. The achievement of this adaptation would eventually derive from a slow process in which two main factors were to play a fundamental role: nutrition and physical strengthening.

On the other hand, the rigorous conditions of their physical environment generated the need for a perfect adaptation – by dominating it, acquiring dexterity in the handling of utensils, defending themselves from animals, obtaining food by means of hunting, fishing, or growing crops – all of which demanded a high development of their physical abilities, through constant exercising, which would enable them to achieve full body fitness. This compelled men to establish a close relationship between the two abovementioned elements: nutrition and physical exercise, which led to the discovery that a balance of both would be the basic pivot around which their health would revolve. Thus, by manipulating nature, human beings were able to turn wild plants and animals into food, and food into medicines; moreover, further research on action – i.e. movements -, improved their adaptation to the environment, allowing a stable organic-functional balance. The discovery of this close relationship between nutrition and physical exercise emerges as the result of a thorough observation and technical knowledge; moreover, what we now call physical training is the field in which the greatest progress was made as regards balanced diet.

According to the Hippocratic Theory, the *díaita* of all human beings has five components: nutrition (food and drink), physical exercise (gymnastics, outings, rest, baths), professional activities or social group, characteristics of the place in which they live (geography and climate), and the changing effects of the *phýsis* determined by age, sex, customs, and the various body complexions. This implies that, when deciding on a certain diet, it is necessary to establish a life regimen which – failing to change residence or profession – requires the subjects to devote themselves to working on their nutrition, physical exercise, and their own characteristic features. It ought to be pointed out that the Hippocratic diet has no resemblance to the athletic diets of today, which are focused on high performance (Garcia Gual, 1986). Working on concrete cases, the author presents six cases which owe their health problems to physical exercise.

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[3]In the Hellenic society, medicine is considered as a *tékhne,* though new philosophical trends, especially sophistry, question its scientific method and, thus, its very nature as a socially recognized "art".

In the Hippocratic Theory, the axis around which diet treatment revolves is the achievement of a balance between physical exercise, food and drink. It is precisely when this healthy balance is disrupted that the primary causes of illness are found. Hippocrates pointed out that both food and physical exercise – though showing opposite influences – complemented each other as far as health is concerned, for balance is the latter's essential condition; moreover, this idea is still upheld in the present (Toscano, 2005).

In his book *On the Articulations* Hippocrates states that each of the parts of the human body have a specific function and adds that, if they are used in moderation according to their function, they will develop well and age more slowly; if on the other hand, they are unused, they are liable to defective growth, or disease, or to age quickly. Though his works include different references to the medical benefits of exercise, he likewise advises prudence when resuming strenuous exercise after long rest periods.

The rigorous conditions of the Greek physical environment, called for a perfect adaptation, i.e. dexterity and ability in the manipulation of utensils, ability to defend themselves from other animals, to obtain food by hunting, fishing, or working on the land – all of which required a high development of their physical capacities through constant exercising, thus achieving full body fitness.

Hippocrates stated that both food and physical exercise, in spite of their opposite influences, complemented each other in matters of health, since balance is the latter's essential condition – an idea that has been upheld to this day. Hippocrates made reference to different types of physical activity; namely, walking (considered as natural exercise), running (well known for its effects on the muscles, and resistance), gymnastic exercises, and different forms of wrestling. He concluded his exposition by referring to what we now call "sports injuries", and to the desired quantity and intensity of physical exercise, with relation to the time when it is practiced – a highly updated topic which is deeply studied and valued in the Hippocratic Theory.

## 17.2.1  An Example

In the second section of *On Diet*, Hippocrates refers to the exercises (*pónoi*), which are a major theme in this work (Toscano, 2005) . He makes a distinctions between natural physical exercises – the exercise of sight, hearing, voice, and thought -[4]; and artificial or "violent" exercises – "constructed" by the imagination of man, and which compel intense effort.[5]

Walking, one of the most ancient forms of physical exercise known to this day, is considered a natural exercise, even when it may be practiced with certain intensity (violence); its effect is highly positive, especially after meals, on rising in the morning, and as a form of relaxation (returning to calm) after a physical training session (Toscano, 2006).

With reference to running, the most advisable forms of racing are the "double and long distance" races – i.e. the middle and long distance races, also noted for their organic-muscular effect, such as resistance -; while the least advisable are the "simple" ones – i.e. short and very short distance foot races, also known as speed or speed-resistance races.

High intensity gymnastic exercises are harmful to feeble individuals; in those cases, movements such as gymnast arm flexing, extending and raising, are highly recommended, for they improve cardio-respiratory capacity. Different forms of wrestling and rubbing – massage – improve and develop the muscles. Gym exercises with the body sprinkled with dust or rubbed with oil differ in the sense that the former element is cold and the latter is warm, thus, the former ought

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[4] The treatise *On Epidemics* VI, 5, reads: "human thought is a leisure walk of the soul".

[5] The author here refers to what is nowadays known as motor task, proposed by the instructor and directed to the intentional development of the human being's physical qualities such as strength, agility, balance, resistance, speed, etc. … The contributions of those movements are universal for they are based on the principles of physiology and kinesiology. The physical purpose of these movements is to recover and maintain man's natural capacities, thus contributing to the development of beauty, harmony, and bodily health.

to be practiced in summer and the latter in winter.[6] The author concludes his exposition on physical exercise, by making reference to the most common, so called, sports injuries; namely, twisting (sprains) and muscular-ligament strain; establishing a close relationship between lack of training (habitual exercise) and injury risk.[7] There is a very interesting explanation to the accumulation, and later crystallization of lactic acid in muscles as a result of prolonged muscle contraction and oxygen debt:

> Those who have not been trained – with humid flesh – undergo an increase in their body temperature when they exert themselves by strenuous exercise, thus suffering the melting of their flesh which produces a liquid, most unnatural to the body. Moreover, it does not accumulate uniformly in the parts which are devoid of flesh, but concentrates on the fleshy parts (muscles), to the point of producing pain until it is finally secreted. (Hippocrates, *On Diet II,* p.66)

He suggests treating this problem as follows:

> …dissolve the accumulated liquid by means of steam and hot water baths and leisure walks, in order to cleanse and help recover the flesh with the aid of light food and by losing weight.

Thus, it should be made clear that Hippocratic medicine proposed a diet which consisted of a "regimen science" and gymnastics or "science of the efficacy of physical exercise", with the aim of achieving a "wholesome balance". For the Hippocratic Theory – a body of knowledge generated twenty five centuries ago – far from being considered obsolete, must be acknowledged and taken into consideration on account of the wide multi-dimensional spectrum it comprises.

## 17.3   Physical Exercise and Health at Present

At this point, we shall offer some comments regarding the concept of health with relation to physical activity – which is directly connected to the Hippocratic Theory.

On making reference to physical activity it is important to determine its effect on body organs and body systems. It is common knowledge that both physical and sporting activities have lately taken a place of privilege in the so called more advanced and developed societies. Thus, it is not surprising that the number of subjects who practice some kind of physical activity should be increasingly higher and, as mentioned above, that this activity should be practiced from an early age – for scientific advances have demonstrated that it enhances body fitness, therefore improving people's health.

Many of the health issues which may be detected at first sight are obesity, nicotine addiction, and hypertension – all of which lead to a high rate of heart attacks in young people. It is at this point that physical activity makes its contribution as a regulating agent that lowers the risk of cardio-vascular illnesses, while improving body fitness and helping to improve the health of those who practice it.

It has been proved that physical activity is one of the main agents to promote health and prevent disease, so long as it is adequately planned and applied according to each case since, under those conditions, it is likely to enhance the vital functions (respiratory, cardiovascular, and metabolic). Hence, quantification of physical activity is one of our greatest concerns, to the extent of becoming the core of the relationship between physical activity and diet – i.e. the point at which we make reference to the Hippocratic Theory which puts forth the need of and exact balance between nutrition and physical exercise.

The importance attached to the quantification of exercise lies in the fact that its proper fulfillment may allow us to demonstrate how useful or

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[6]He points out the importance given by the ancients to oil or "oleum" (*élaion*) in their gymnastic practices.

[7]The notion of "habit" is the key to diet treatments in general, even more so in the practice of physical exercise in particular.

ineffective it may be. This determines the degree of importance given to physical activity in child-hood, i.e. when practiced from an early age, and creates a habit which will allow children to share moments that may contribute to their healthcare in a pleasant way.

Physical activity offers the subjects certain advantages and benefits in different environ-ments, and at different levels. Furthermore, it is important to become aware of the fact that this practice is also beneficial to the social system in which the subjects live, for the inclusion of sports and physical activities in the programs and norms that regulate the educational course syllabi is only part of a mechanism that makes an orga-nized society work.

Nowadays, when making reference to the physical activity-health relationship, we take Devís (1996, p.15) as a reference when he states that, from the point of view of healthcare, physi-cal exercise is a tool for any person, regardless of their physical or functional capacity.

Although there is a general idea that the mere practice of physical exercise is beneficial to health, this is not always the case – for this idea does not explicitly contemplate the content, vol-ume, and intensity of the aforementioned prac-tice. Thus, there are three distorting sources regarding the effects and benefits that physical activity may have on health; namely, the idea that it is a kind of panacea; imprecision in the ways in which it should be practiced (type, content, vol-ume, intensity); and basic misinformation as to the reasons and circumstances that generate the desired effects. (Sánchez Bañuelos 1996).

The incorporation of physical activity to peo-ple's life styles and its influence on health was approached for the first time in the twentieth cen-tury, in the 1980s, and according to Sánchez Bañuelos (1996, p.29) the environmental condi-tions for the practice of physical activity are: physical tasks related to the subjects' work or occupation, household tasks, physical education in educational systems, leisure and recreational physical activity (sports, movement games, dancing, etc.). This is related to the diet applied by Hippocrates, oriented towards a balanced state of health, i.e. a "wholesome balance".

From a functional and biological point of view, physical activity may be considered as any body movement produced by muscular contrac-tion, leading to a substantial increase in energy expenditure. This traditional conception restricts physical activity to a process, and physical condi-tion to a result. On the other hand, the consider-ation of a more general perspective allows us to distinguish the quantitative and qualitative aspects of physical activity. Quantitative aspects are directly related to the consumption and mobi-lization of the energy required for the practice of a physical activity; while qualitative aspects are related to the type of activity, its purpose, and the social context.

Shepard (2003, p. 9) has admitted that it was only in the twenty-first century that consensus was achieved regarding the definition of this term, and further points out that physical activity extends to all types of muscular activity which result in a substantial increase of energetic expen-diture, and that exercise is a subtype of structured and regular physical activity, practiced deliber-ately and with specific purposes such as athletic competition, or health improvement.

In the United States of America and Canada, concern about the relationship between the pop-ulation's health and the development of physical activities arose in the 1970s, triggered, in par-ticular, by the works of Oldridge (1979) on heart patients.

Regarding health, the WHO Almá Atá Declaration (1978) defined it as a state of com-plete physical, mental, and social wellness and not as the mere absence of illness. Over 30 years later, WHO itself defined the concept of "right to health", which means that governments should create the proper conditions that will allow peo-ple to live as wholesomely as possible; expressly mentioning that those conditions include a guar-anteed availability to health services, wholesome and secure working conditions, adequate hous-ing, and nutritious food – further specifying that the right to health must not be merely understood as the right to be healthy.

Regarding our field of study in particular – i.e. "the health-physical activity relationship" – in May 2004, the World Health Organization

supported the WHA57.17 resolution: Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health (DPAS), and recommended that the Member States should increase the levels of physical activity among their populations with the purpose of diminishing and preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs); and further conferring a major role to the professionals of all related fields.

In the light of this information, we pose this question: Is it then possible to establish a relationship between physical activity, health, and QOL?

## 17.4 Physical Activity, Health, and Quality of Life: A Relationship to be Taken into Consideration

The development of the concept of quality of life has been related to the conception of health, since its beginnings in the 1960s.

> Quality of life denotes the individual perception all subjects have regarding their position in the cultural context and value system they live in; with relation to their achievements, expectations, and interests. It is a vast and complex conception which takes into consideration physical and mental health, their level of independence, as well as social and environmental relationships. (WHOQOL Group 1995)

The study of quality of life has been defined as a concept involving two axes: objective and subjective, each of which comprise seven domains operationalized in the comprehensive quality of life scale constructed by Cummins (1997): material well-being, health, work-productivity, intimacy, safety, community, emotional well-being.

If we take into account the importance of quality of life, it is clearly necessary to reconsider the concept of health, since both conceptions are related. Quoting (Sánchez Bañuelos 1996) the new dimension attributed to the concept of health may be understood as being "strikingly related to the conception of quality of life".

It is important to take into account that, if physical activity is to produce any beneficial effects on our bodies, the latter should undergo necessary and essential changes or adaptation phenomena – muscular, cardio-respiratory, etc. A normal adaptation of the body to physical and sports activities requires that certain guidelines should be taken into consideration:

(a) Synchrony between physical activity and alternate recovery periods, in accordance with the kind of physical activity,
(b) The exercises ought to be progressive, from lower to higher intensity, from the simplest to the most complex, gradually increasing both in volume and intensity, in order to avoid fatigue (which might hinder the normal development of the activity) and, moreover, enhance the performance.
(c) The physical activity should aim at a harmonious development of the different physical qualities, thus enabling health improvement.
(d) All physical activity or exercise should be adapted to those who practice it –i.e. it should be in accordance with our physical qualities, since our characteristics and physical conditions vary, as adaptation processes vary, depending on each individual.

Current tendencies articulate the formation of body image with the development of knowledge regarding the improvement of quality of life (health care and protection of the environment), together with the encouragement of attitudes of respect and integration with others through various practices that include recreational activities and contact with nature (Braslavsky 1999).

## 17.5 Conclusions

Going back to the Hippocratic Theory, we shall coincide in the fact that, aside from each of the subjects' life regimens, Hippocrates conceived health as the result of an adequate balance between nutrition (that nurtures) and physical exercise (that expends). This leads to a quest for a wholesome balance derived from gymnastics which, in the works of Hippocrates, appears as incorporated to diet.

An active lifestyle is instrumental in determining physical and mental health. In fact, a subject's body cannot be expected to keep healthy for long terms if it is mistreated and overfed. These changes – which are made evident in the criteria for the interpretation of health – lead to a conclusion which establishes that, together with the boom of competitive sports, a new idea has evolved which expresses the firm belief that moderate and adequately graduated physical activity will pave the way for a healthy lifestyle.

The development of physical exercises must lead to an improvement in the population's quality of life – the latter being conceived as the notion that acknowledges the fact that people have their own lifestyles and life conditions, attaching as much value (or even more) to that experience, than to the material or objective conditions that some experts define as adequate (Casas 1996:96).

We coincide with the specialized literature that acknowledges physical activity as one of the constituents of the lifestyles regarded as health-boosting. On the other hand, since many research papers that relate physical activity with health fail to regard the latter as a global and multi-factor phenomenon, for they are centered in traditional aspects, (Generelo Lanaspa 1996), our approach in this text is of the inter-discipline type and therefore considers health as one of the indicators that measure a population's quality of life, as Sánchez Buñuelos (1996) points out; hence, this new dimension attributed to the term health may be remarkably related to the concept of quality of life.

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# The Live Well Index and the Motivation for Physical Activity Profile: Two Cross-National Studies on the Correlates and Drives for a Life with Quality

**18**

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## Abstract

Two studies were undertaken in two different samples of eight European countries. The aim of these studies was twofold: (1) to develop and validate, according to psychometric standards, an online self-administered instrument to measure the variables related to what is to "Live well" (the Live Well Index, LWI) taking into consideration four major domains: To Move Well, to Eat Well, to Feel Well and Perceived Health; (2) To investigate the particular role of physical activity in a life well lived, and to develop and validate motivational profiles for doing and sustaining the

practice of physical exercise (Aspirational Profiles). The two initial questionnaire were developed using data from (a) a qualitative study (twenty Interviews and two Focus Group) on what is to Live Well, taking the four dimensions into contemplation, and (b) a quantitative study on motivations for physical activity. Both were conducted to generate items that identify domains and portraits. Alongside, an extensive literature review was implemented. Content analysis for the qualitative data was intertwined with principal factor analysis and cluster analysis, regarding the quantitative data, with the aim of generating the final items, either for the LWI and the Aspirational Profiles. The second phase of the two studies included 876 participants from eight European countries for the LWI and a sample of 1177 participants that joined in the pilot validation of the initial questionnaires; This phase included translation, retroversion and validation for each of the languages used in the two questionnaires. A list of easily comprehensible, non-redundant items was defined for the two instruments. The final Live Well Index is a brief measure that includes 17 questions. It can be connected to the Aspirational Profile on physical activity, that includes 19

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quastions, and allows for a deeper exploration of the Move Well dimension, one of the four scopes of the LWI. Implications for the study and promotion of quality of life, supported in these pillars, are addressed, in particular in what concerns the role of physical activity for quality of life, and how to promote exercise in accordance with people's specific motivations.

## 18.1 Introduction

This chapter puts forward a model of quality of life that is focused on the realisation of the human potential, and the journey of progressively actualising an excellence that is consistent with each person's capacity for greatness. It uses a multidimensional approach, analysed under an interdisciplinary framework with cross-cultural perspectives. The theoretical, historical and philosophical foundations are summarised, and its empirical translation is briefly described. Two studies will be subsequently presented, aiming at contributing to the development of quantitative measurement scales. Implications for the study and promotion of quality of life supported in these pillars are addressed, with a special focus on physical activity.

To give the reader a glimpse of the empirical research, we introduce the scales' construction process, illustrating the diverse steps involved, and their rigorous empirical scrutiny.

The studies were undertaken in different samples of eight European countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland. The global aims were twofold:

1. to develop and validate, according to psychometric standards, a self-administered questionnaire, devoted to measure the variables related to what is to "Live Well" (the Live Well Index, LWI), taking into consideration four major domains: to Move Well; to Eat Well; to Feel Well; to have Meaning in life; and Perceived Health;
2. to develop and validate a self-report measure that permits to empirically identify distinct

homogenous subgroups linked to motivational profiles for exercise and sports (the Motivation for Physical Activity Profile, MOPAP).

For such an endeavour, an extensive literature review was undertaken in the domains of subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, health, quality of life, physical exercise, nutrition, public and private happiness, and habit creation. Using an explanatory sequential mixed method, both studies were conducted to generate items that identified domains and portraits for the two questionnaires. Interviews and focus groups were used to gather the first qualitative data. Content analysis was subsequently applied to explore results. That phase of the research was followed by an online quantitative survey that integrated a complex process of back-translation by an expert team for all the languages spoken in the countries enrolled. Principal factor analysis for construct validation was predominantly used, alongside with cluster analysis, to investigate quantitative data and explore psychometric properties and sensitivity of the scales. This process allowed the generation of a list of easily comprehensible, non-redundant items for the two instruments. Subsequently, the final two questionnaires were developed.

The ultimate phases of the two studies, performed in a temporally parallel interplay, included an online survey (N = 876 participants) from the 8 European countries previously referred to, for the LWI, and a web-based sample from the same countries (N = 1177), for the MOPAP, with the aim of empirically, through statistic methods, developing the two questionnaires.

The final LWI is a brief measure that includes 17 questions, exploring the four indicated domains. The final MOPAP explores motivations for physical activity and helps to assemble empirical profiles that can be useful for tailored exercise materials. It includes 19 questions, and allows for a deeper exploration of the Move Well dimension, one of the four scopes of the LWI.

In a domain where a large display of concepts indicates how well we are doing, or how much we are thriving (terms such as "quality of life",

"wellbeing", "happiness", "life-satisfaction" and "health" all point in the direction of what is good) the ambivalence and lack of consensus among global, umbrella merits, and specific aspects of a life with quality can be confusing (Prilleltensky 2005; Veenhoven 2016). Indeed, thinkers of diversified arenas − psychology, sociology, philosophy, economics, health sciences − have never agreed on a final definition of "quality of life", and propose that we cannot speak about it at large. As a consequence, many meanings are present on current debates.

Measurement of quality of life is also problematic, with recent publications describing its risks, challenges and controversies, and identifying strategic proposals as foundations for the development of quantitative measurement scales (e.g., Bruni and Porta 2016; Crivelli et al. 2016; Delle Fave 2016; Noval 2016; Guerini and Nuvolati 2016; Marujo and Neto 2016; Maggino 2016; Prilleltensky et al. 2015; Rojas 2016; Veenhoven 2016).

Acknowledging these complexities, some clarifications have a place here. In the present chapter, the approach to the valuable and healthy lifestyles is done through a non-exhaustive composite set of capabilities that have an effect on the individual's life and health conditions. Aiming to add to the existing body of knowledge, and the creation of simple and culturally sensitive measurement tools, the focus of this work is on four specific health-related variables of quality of life – physical activity, nutrition, emotional wellbeing, and perceived health. These four attributes are not addressed as broad overall and all-inclusive, and do not aim to cover entirely the most relevant myriad of notions, but rather to be presented as domain specific and relevant correlates for a happy and worthy life.

Furthermore, the approach adopted in the current chapter recognises Sen's perspective of an agency role of human beings on the development of a good life (Sen 2000), and points to a citizens' good living, and not to the quality of a society, although it recognises that, apart from the agentic attitude mentioned, the individual's good living also requires favourable objective circum-

stances – economic, social, environmental, political – for its development (Sen, op. cit.).

The complex relationship between health and wellbeing and the issue of reverse causality are not addressed directly either. Nevertheless, it is aligned with the empirical and contemporary conclusion: that causality runs in both directions (Crivelli et al. 2016).

Alongside, the chapter attempts to chart quality of life throughout subjective indicators under the self-report tradition of generic scales and surveys, and considers its significant part on the measurement of these themes, still recognising the complementary role of objective components as essential for an aggregate and comprehensive measurement of a life well lived (e.g., Bruni and Porta 2016; Marujo and Neto 2016).

Inside the rich tradition of health and happiness measurements, where this study is contained, there are various inventories to assess individual health status, which combine self-assessed physical and mental functioning, and impairment domains. They tend to struggle with multidimensional and complex assets that incorporate challenges such as the determinants of quality of life, the significance and hierarchy of topics included in the classification of a life with quality, and how much of each component is optimal in a particular context (Maggino 2016; Veenhoven 2016). This study does not address a hierarchic perspective, considering the adopted attributes as equally relevant.

The current measurement of health, quality of life or happiness, albeit extremely relevant for the advancement of the field, leaves open theoretical and empirical questions that have relevant consequences for research (Crivelli et al. 2016; Noval 2016). Using a variety of indicators that can rely on subjective perceptions, physiological symptoms, clinical signs, behaviours, and so on, self-assessed health status is currently the most used in the field of health-related quality of life determinants, due to being simple, cheap, informative and particularly useful for selected groups of people. Even if subjective indicators can produce biased results (Jylha 2009), they have a pivotal role in the assessment of quality of

life since, on average, people tend to be accurate at self-evaluating their private subjective feelings, and the relationship with the objective indicators is, in general, strong (Diener and Tay 2016; Diener n.d.). Since the correlation between health and subjective measures of wellbeing and quality of life appears to be stronger in studies that use self-assessed health (Angner et al. 2013), the authors of this chapter also contemplate the possible conceptual and semantic overlapping between the two measures (Veenhoven 2008).

Taking into consideration that the present research was conducted across nations, it also took seriously the "differential item functioning" associated with cultural perceptions, norms, expectations, and linguistic meanings. Since this differential can interfere with the results, limiting comparisons (Chevalier and Fielding 2011), these two studies used and explanatory sequential mixed method, and an expert team approach (Netz et al. 2005) to try to control potential errors, and develop culturally sensitive materials.

## 18.2 Reconciling Attribute Indicators in Health-Related Quality of Life

The scientific study of the conditions and characteristics of human life has nearly a century, and is currently confluent with movements of research in economics, psychology, sociology, public policies, health sciences and other disciplines. Indeed, no investigation into the nature of betterment of human experience can avoid an interdisciplinary viewpoint (Di Martino et al. in press).

Although the history of the idea of quality of life is frequently and adequately traced to Aristotle, as an empirical concept it was only coined in the early twentieth-century. Including diverse elements and levels of analysis, the concept laid the foundations of a long, transformative and challenging line of research, that differentiated life as an experience from its quality/qualities, and discriminated between living itself and living well (Diener and Chan 2011; Huppert 2014; Noval 2016; Veenhoven 2016).

In an arena where theoretical conceptions proliferate, and the growth has been exponential in recent years, identifying those qualities has been a strenuous work for thinkers.

The philosophical roots tracked to Aristotle show that his theory of the good life included as qualities (a) feelings and values at the internal individual sphere; (b) the outer and body goods enjoyed, such as health, wealth, power, family, friends, at the external individual level; (c) the social and institutional conditions (an element of the good life in itself); and finally, (d) the social values and the techno-scientific criteria, that are beyond the individual, which corresponds to the judgment of the good man (Noval 2016). Together, they define private and public happiness.

Since the Aristotelian idea, there has been a succession of other approaches emphasising one or another of these diverse levels and features. In the Middle Ages, and the early modern area, one can find illuminating thinkers like Thomas More, Tommaso Campanella and Francis Bacon discussing the topic and developing their own lists of components that they consider constitutive of the upside of human experience.

Alluding to these three authors is justified since they all considered health – a central topic to this chapter – as a vital element of a life well-lived. In More, the underlying perspective is about social issues, with a particular attention to health systems and their role in people's quality of life. Like More, Campanella takes into consideration economic and social determinants for the good life, but he frames as fundamental the role of freedom and intrinsic motivation, both at the sphere of work and health. Conserving health, which he considers the result of the individual's life style and habits, depends, in his point of view, on two elements: a balanced and moderated diet, and physical activity. Advocating for prevention of diseases through a holistic view on health was therefore one of his interesting contributions to the movement of quality of life (Noval 2016). Finally, Francis Bacon considers that human virtues will emerge from scientific and technological progress, suggesting a technocratic approach to quality of life, and

listing three elements of the good life: material prosperity, family, and health.

Bacon's view was expanded by the Economists of the Enlightenment, in particular by Jeremy Bentham, bringing forward the topic of the consumption of goods and services as the most important components of the good life, while mainly discharging civic, intellectual and ethical virtues (Bruni and Porta 2016; Noval 2016). More recently, other authors have contributed in a disruptive way to the field. This is the case of Richard Easterlin (1974), whose empirical test on the aggregate of individuals' reports on happiness showed − among other relevant conclusions regarding the unchanged distribution of happiness despite of substantial increases in per capita income levels − that there are three big factors that affect human wellbeing universally: material wealth, family and health.

The alternative approach developed by Amartya Sen (2000), described as the capability framework, also brings forward a multidimensional notion of human functioning ("doings and beings") as basic constituents of analysis, where the person is in the centre (Noval 2016). Without postulating a hierarchy, and therefore a proposal of the weights, Sen points out that the opportunities that people have for good living, or substantive freedoms − where wealth and economic development play a vital, but not exclusive role − will make possible an interconnected set of indicators, such as health care, nutrition, basic civil and democratic rights, education, political liberty and the like. The impact of Sen's approach has been mainly upon the proposals regarding objective quality of life indicators, addressed as the Kantian approach (Bruni and Porta 2016; Noval 2016). Nevertheless, the subjective level of satisfaction of individuals with respect to each of the dimensions – the utilitarian approach, that advocates and reduces the good life to positive subjective feelings (Noval, op. cit., p. 172) − has grown in the recent past. Its development also created critical perspectives, opening the space to a eudaimonic and personal growth point of view, transcending the mere positive affect and exploring who is flourishing, why, under which conditions.

There is a subsequent need for a good measurement system. For decades, researchers, politicians and professionals in the arena of quality of life have been debating and advocating that an ongoing system of indicators be instituted by organisations and governments to track wellbeing and quality of life around the world and over time (Bruni and Porta 2016; Diener et al. 2016).

In the early twenties of the last century, the initial movement of the empirical indicators, proposed by sociologists, aimed at going beyond the traditional economic markers, in order to arrive to some kind of social accountability perspective on quality of life (Veenhoven 1994). These social indicator's movements flourished in the 1960s due to the cultural and political climate of that time, mainly defending normative indicators.

Following the fundamental role played by this movement, in the 1960s and 1970s health professionals used those indicators as a parameter for making decisions in health matters (Pennacchini et al. 2011). It was during the 1980s that some philosophers utilised quality of life to underscore moral judgments, in particular justifying euthanasia and other end of life processes in circumstances of disability and complex diseases (Pennacchini et al. op. cit.). In the following decades, scholars opened a deep debate about quality of life, associating it with health and happiness – a standpoint ignored by the traditional GDP approach –, and proposed subjectivist assessments (Barile et al. 2013). Consequently, researchers focused their interest on the development and testing of instruments designed to measure health and quality of life, studied from different perspectives, including subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, and hedonic and eudaimonic happiness (Bilsker et al. 2009; Huppert 2014; Huppert and So 2013; Huta and Ryan 2010; Lou 2009; Pennacchini et al. 2011; Seligman 2008; Taylor and Sherman 2004).

Currently, the most relevant debate that puts "happiness" at the centre of the new paradigm – always as a globally accepted aspiration – concentrates more on measurement and the proliferation of indicators without a rationale, balancing from objective to subjective dimensions, and discussing the particular risks of

evaluating exclusively on the basis of individuals and subjective perceptions and also not solely on the basis of objective markers. In the face of such a complex and multi-layered reality, the requirement is to develop and use many indicators, designed and integrated in a consistent conceptual frame (Maggino 2016; Rojas 2016). Hence, evaluating and improving health-related behaviours for a better quality of life needs to continue to capitalise on the greatest possibilities for growth, in special in such a convoluted society.

## 18.3 How Should We Live? The Role of Physical Exercise, Nutrition, and Well-Being for a Healthy and Virtuous Life

Amidst the concerns about what constitutes a life worth living when attending to health issues, the recent growing of health problems that affect quality of life – cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, mental problems, and others – has also attracted attention to the topic (Barile et al. 2013).

The health-related notion of quality of life, in particular in the quality of self-care, is of special interest to this chapter. It addresses a multidimensional concept that includes realms related to physical, emotional, cognitive and social functioning, with a core component on the subjective, personal perspective as overriding. Health-related quality of life includes idiosyncratic accounts of symptoms, performance in several life domains, side effects of treatments and interventions, and general perceptions of life satisfaction and quality of life (Revicki et al. 2014). It is commonly measured by direct query of health status, coming directly from the individual without interpretation from a clinician, even if that implies worries to the possible limitations of self-report outcomes (Revicki et al. op. cit.). The concept goes beyond direct measures of population objective health, life expectancy, and mortality indicators, and focuses on the perception of the impact of health status on quality of life, therefore getting closer to the

wellbeing concept. Participation measures, that reflect a person's assessment of the impact of their health on social participation – from employment to civic, social, leisure, and educational activities – are a good example of the role of assessing functional limitations and wellbeing impacts. For this reason we included in our LWI a measure of participation regarding perceived health.

Self-rated health, and wellbeing measures – assessing global physical, emotional and social attributes, including satisfaction with life in general, or/and with specific domains of people's lives, and/or private and public happiness indicators (e.g. realisation of own potential, resilience, social connectedness and relational goods, and meaning in life) – are relevant ways to understand more deeply immaterial resources that contribute to a life with quality (Bruni and Porta 2016; Delle Fave 2016).

For this reason, we integrated what we called the "to Feel Well/Meaning" dimension. The capacity to maintain high levels of wellbeing has been documented to be related to multiple benefits for health and longevity – stroke, cognitive impairment, coronary heart disease, nutritional non-regulation, preventive health behaviours, among others (Kim et al. 2013a, b).

Subjective evaluations of quality of life and subjective wellbeing seem to be a strong predictor of better health and lower mortality (Diener and Chan 2011). The perception of well-being, and the presence of a high percentage of positive emotions in daily life were associated with the development of effective strategies to cope with life challenges (Delle Fave 2016). This is the case, among many others, of the findings indicating an association between high positive emotion and lower blood pressure among older adults (Ostir et al. 2006). Targeting the emotional health of older adults might be considered as part of non-pharmacologic hypertension treatment programs or as adjunctive therapy for those on anti-hypertensive medication. The same type of conclusions is emerging from addressing other health problems (McNaughton et al. 2012).

Apart from positive emotions, there are other relevant elements that impact health.

Indeed, when the studies were conducted under sub-health conditions, namely among persons with chronic disease and short and long-term disabilities, the crucial role upon wellbeing was dependent of eudaimonic – and not hedonic, or emotionally positive – components, namely meaning in life, sense of coherence, and perceived opportunities for engagement and skill development (Delle Fave 2016). Reduced risk for multiple disease outcomes and higher longevity, related to higher levels of eudaimonic wellbeing, are particularly present in older adults (McNaughton et al. 2012). Actually, health benefits have been documented among adults that live a life with purpose. They include better likelihood of implementing preventive health behaviours, better gene expression linked with inflammatory responses, reduced risk of multiple disease outcomes, lowered dysregulation of biological systems, and extended length of life (Ryff 2014; Ryff et al. 2015b). Knowing that wellbeing levels provide a buffer to diseases and even to material deprivation (Ryff et al. 2015b), it is relevant to introduce evaluations of psychological health and wellbeing in current approaches to quality of life. Meaningful, fulfilling lives, with good relational quality, are fundamental for health and longevity, a reason why scholars and practitioners around the world are developing programs to enhance them. The realisation of one's true potential, progressively actualising each person's excellence, once again, goes back to Aristotle, and it is at the heart of Ryff's eudaimonic model (Dierendonck et al. 2008; Ryff 2014). It includes six domains that have been showing to be relevant components for wellbeing: Autonomy, Mastery of the Environment, Self-acceptance, Positive Relationships, Personal Growth and Purpose in Life.

Becoming what you are (self-responsibility), and knowing thyself (self-truth) (Ryff and Singer 2008) are enactments of optimal human functioning. This perspective, of addressing health as health (Ryff and Singer, 1998) steered the work presented in this chapter, in particular the Live Well Index, and the wish to keep operationalising WHO's definition (1948) on health as social, mental and physical wellbeing.

Hence, the idea of assessing wellbeing – the Feel Well/Meaning psychological dimension – is not only currently accepted, but constantly recommended if we want to understand and enhance the quality of people's lives (Marujo and Neto 2016). Actually, the measures are proliferating, and only a few have strong theoretical foundations, rigorous empirical scrutiny, and tested validity, reliability, and dimensional structure (Ryff 2014; Ryff et al. 2015b).

If psychological factors are so relevant to health and disease, there is no doubt that physical activity and nutrition also have clear benefits and are major determinants of health and disease. They have been associated with a range of major public health concerns: hypertension, coronary heart disease, colon cancer, weight gain, type 2 diabetes, risk of premature mortality, osteoporosis, and other chronical diseases (WHO 2003). The last few years have witnessed a vivid progression of the research agenda, addressing questions of huge public consequence, enlarged interdisciplinary awareness, and straight ramifications for practice.

In fact, when practised, sports and exercise have been showing, through consistent empirical evidence, to result in many psychological and social health benefits, from reducing stress and distress, to better psychological fitness (e.g. Van Uffelen et al. 2015). The impact of higher wellbeing on greater physical health has also been confirmed (e.g. Eime et al. 2016), with the reciprocal being likewise true (Edwards et al. 2005). The use of exercise for the treatment of mental health problems – from additions to cognitive function – is therefore prescribed, with the backup of empirical work (Biddle and Mutrie 2008).

Among others, the study of the exercise-affect relationship remains one of the most pulsating and productive zones of research within exercise psychology (e.g. Conner et al. 2011). In what concerns emotion research in health behaviour and physical activity sciences, the main achievements of knowledge on the subject include a mounting recognition that exercise can have a positive and clinically meaningful influence on affect (Ekkekakis et al. 2013). The inclusion of affect in exercise prescription

guidelines is used as a method of scrutinising and increasing its practice, and a way of promoting adherence. Studies have examined whether affective responses can be used as a practical method of monitoring and self-regulating exercise intensity and increasing attention is placed on the implications of affective responses for adherence. For this reason, positive affect is currently considered the third basic element of exercise prescriptions, beside effectiveness and safety (Hansen et al. 2012).

Habit psychology studies has also been vibrating. The related literature shows that exercising a minimum of four sessions per week for 6 weeks is the least requirement to establish the habit of exercising (Gardner 2015). Low behavioural complexity, environment and affective judgments, and consistency − all significantly predict changes in habit formation over time (e.g., Conner et al. 2011).

Exercise promotion and assistance for prescribing the right exercise for a person's motivation type are fundamental for better population health. Self-regulatory behaviours, health belief models, implicit and explicit attitudes towards physical activity, the cognitive profile of those who intend to exercise, but do not, and personality and physical environment as predictors of exercise action control − they are all motivational correlates influencing preventive health behaviour (Cavill et al. 2006; Horne et al. 2012).

Hence, conceptualisation and measurement of routine exercise and sedentary behaviour, and a population-based study of barriers, enjoyment, and preferences continue to be an important approach towards enhanced quality of life.

Finally, nutrition is also a contemporary element of the future of health and quality of life. Its importance has been addressed as part of a solution to many economic, societal, and environmental challenges of current developed societies. The expression of Food as Medicine says it all. Indeed, there is a clear evidence-based relationship between nutrition and the promotion of long-term health, longevity and wellbeing (e.g., Harvard School of Public Health n.d.). Making informed and conscious choices regarding food intake – heathy eating patterns, types of food and amount of food intake, daily schedule and number of meals, balanced diets, and so on – have a positive impact on health, and poor diets have negative long-term effects. Proper nutrition helps to perform physically, maintain wellness, and fight diseases (e.g., Ireland Minister of Health 2012).

There are associations between dietary behaviours and non-communicable diseases, as much as evidence-based dietary interventions for specific illnesses. Again, enablers and inhibitors to heathy eating – which include personal, cultural, social and environmental dimensions – need to keep being addressed by research, as specified for wellbeing and exercise.

The combination of a bad diet with sedentary lifestyles and stress have shown to impact current social problems such as obesity and associated comorbidities and risk factors (diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, respiratory problems, certain cancers, among others) (e.g. Harvard School of Public Health n.d.). Recognising that research has shown that diet has an effect on behaviour, on emotional and cognitive function, and on mental and behavioural problems such as depression, hyperactivity, insomnia, and anxiety, which can be alleviated or compromised by food consumption and nutrient intake. Studying the variability in metabolic responses to food is also an important future avenue, since it can lead to better informed health and food choices for subpopulations, and specific policies (e.g., Gardner et al. 2011).

Consequently, a growing number of investigations with a broader approach need to be articulated, and methodological developments brought further.

## 18.4   Two Studies on Health-Related Quality of Life

To address these issues, and with the main objective of developing a Live Well Index, and a set of empirical motivational profiles regarding physical activity, two cross-cultural studies in 8 European countries – Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and

Switzerland – were developed. Both are described below, listing main objectives, samples, methods of data collection and data analysis, results and implications for assessing and promoting health-related quality of life.

### 18.4.1  Study 1: Live Well Index

This first study aimed to develop a tool to help individuals assess their quality of life and healthy lifestyle that can also be used in research contexts. The Live Well Index (LWI) generated proposes to allow the monitoring of self-reported lifestyle behaviours, in terms of (1) perceived health and impacts of illness in daily life (Subjective Health), (2) physical exercise (Move Well), (3) emotional wellbeing (Feel Well/Meaning), and (4) eating habits (Eat Well).

The main goals of the LWI were to allow people to easily and quickly self-diagnose and monitor behaviour patterns, and therefore to make them aware of their habits and potential need for change in terms of physical exercise, emotional status, impact of health in daily life, and nutrition. The regular assessment of current behaviour and its consequences, taking into consideration how this type of behaviour change with time, can be a motivator for maintaining a good lifestyle or changing it in a good/better direction.

#### 18.4.1.1    Design of the Study
*The research processes included*:

- Extensive analysis of the scientific literature and compilation of concepts, theories and studies that best explain the four attributes under analysis – Eat Well, Move Well, Feel Well/Meaning and Subjective Health – and the general concept of Living Well/Healthy Life;
- Detailed study of other similar assessment tools;
- Selection of a sample of physically active (N = 36, 20 women and 16 men) and sedentary participants (N = 20, 11 women and 9 men) for interviews; and two focus groups (N = 16, 9 women and 8 men) to assess the

most relevant dimensions and specify needs for each arena (research conducted in Portugal);
- Translation and retroversion of research instruments and interview responses to and for the different languages of the eight countries involved;
- Pilot study of the questionnaire – oral pre-test and numeric pre-test – to calibrate and fine-tune the questionnaire (in the eight countries);
- Constitution and analysis of a database;
- Delivery of the LWI questionnaire to a sample of health club's clients and to an online research sample;
- Creation of the final Index;
- Linking the data collected to a subsequent study, the MOPAP (study 2, below), that is devoted to the construction of a Profile regarding motives for Physical exercise.

#### 18.4.1.2    Sample
In the final step of the research procedure, the total number of participants from the above mentioned eight European countries included in the data set was 876. Most participants (64.1%) were aged 20–50 years, with the upper limit of 70 years old. More than one third (38%) of all participants were aged 20–29 years, closely followed by the 30–39-year age group (32.9%). The 40–49 years' age group followed, with 21% of participants. There was a much higher proportion of female participation (72.1%, N = 632 vs 27.9% of men, N = 244).

Most participants were employed (71.9%), and almost half of the sample (48.5%) was single. More than 30% of the sample has an overall household annual income between 12,000 and 36,000 euros.

The sample included mostly people that practised regular exercise − some kind of sports or physical exercise (N = 679 who practised versus N = 187 sedentary). We therefore considered two discriminant groups: one group of people who do regular physical activity; and one group of sedentary people.

### 18.4.1.3 The Final Assessment Tool

The final LWI Index includes four demographic questions, followed by 16 questions divided in the four different specific domains:

- Feel Well/Meaning (Dimension 1; e.g., "Please rate the following sentences using a scale between one and ten: I am very satisfied with my life");
- Subjective Health (Dimension 2; e.g., "From one to seven, did your health interfere with the following life domains in the last year? (Never = 1 … Always = 7)";
- Move Well (Dimension 3; e.g., "From one to seven, how do you rate your physical activity on your daily life? (1= Very Sedentary… .7=Very Active)"); and
- Eat Well (Dimension 4; e.g., "From one to seven, how varied is your diet? (1=Not varied at all…7=Totally varied)"

### 18.4.1.4 Results

**Feel Well/Meaning**

In terms of average, the scores of the participants that exercise regularly were superior to the ones who have a sedentary life in this psychological dimension. This happens in each of the four attributes, except in the Subjective Health dimension.

This last result can be interpreted as a good consequence of regular exercise (better perceived general health, with less occurrences of illness, or/and less self-evaluated impact upon different daily life activities when disease strikes).

Answering a question regarding how young they feel, in general participants say they feel globally younger than they actually are, when comparing to people of the same objective age. This is clearly the case also for the specifics of how they feel regarding their psychological energy, comparing to others.

Nonetheless, they tend to feel the same age (not younger, not older) than others of their objective age in terms of their nutritional behaviour and of their physical health.

The most interesting result in this particular topic is the one that shows that people that exercise tend to say that they feel younger than others when thinking in terms of their practices of physical activity, a perception that is not present in sedentary participants.

In fact, the ones who do not exercise regularly tend to evaluate the way they feel regarding their age in comparison with others, in what concerns physical activity, either as having the same age, or even feeling older than the others of their age group.

These results can be interpreted as showing that chronological age is therefore somehow an abstract, subjective influenced judgement and a relative value, and seems to be induced by the practice of physical exercise.

Data also shows that more than 70% of the sample is very satisfied with their lives, extremely appreciative of who they are, feeling energetic in daily shores, and considering that they learn, grow and develop with daily challenges and life experiences. Also, participants of this study mostly perceived themselves as very capable of solving the majority of their everyday problems (74%), and believed that their lives are useful and worthwhile (76%). Previous research shows that people with these characteristics tend to be more active, more prone to take action and initiative, and more motivated for change (Diener and Chan 2011; Edwards et al. 2005; Govindji and Linley 2007; Hancock 2011; Huppert 2014; Huta and Ryan 2010; Keyes and Magyar-Moe 2003; Lafrenière et al. 2012; Lewis et al. 2013, 2014; Mutrie and Faulkner 2004; Peterson et al. 2005).

Participants also perceived themselves as being able to be truthful to who they are, having an engaged life where they feel competent, and where social relationships are gratifying and supporting.

The majority of the sample see themselves as having psychological strengths, and good thinking and reasoning skills, as much as a life with positive activities, which takes them to depict a very positive general satisfaction with life. All the average results in this to Feel Well/Meaning domain are above point 7 in a scale of 1 to 10.

## To Move Well

In our sample, the higher percentage of people that exercise has already been physically active for more than 10 years. Globally, they are not as satisfied with their physical activity patterns, as they are with how they feel about life.

The amount of time dedicated to each exercise session, in what concerns the participants of this study that exercise regularly, is between 45 min and 1 h and a half.

For the ones that only exercise occasionally, there is a larger sample that used to exercise in the past. To understand what needs to happen so that they can go back to a more regular practice of physical activity will be discussed in Study 2 (see below). These results resonates with other research on the topic (e.g., Craig et al. 2003).

## To Eat Well

In what concerns the Eat Well component, the perceptions regarding how healthy and varied diet is, data from this sample show similar results regarding their physical activity experience: they are not as satisfied as they are with their emotional life, ranging in average satisfaction levels of 4.5, in a 1–7 scale. There is also a lot of variation regarding the number of daily meals, with people eating 3, 4 or 5 meals a day. Nevertheless, they tend to consider that they do not eat too much in terms of food intake.

The majority of the sample (68%) say they drink plenty of water and avoid non-alcoholic sugary beverages. The same can be said regarding alcoholic beverages, with a large sub-sample not drinking or drinking only a few beverages a week (62%). In contrast, the ingestion of coffee and caffeine beverages is high in average (82%) but, again, with a great deal of dispersion in the sample's behaviour. More than 60% of the participants say they compensate after a heavy meal, eating a lighter one, and consider that they tend to adapt nutritional choices to daily activities.

## Subjective Health

Finally, in what concerns the perceived health dimension, participants rate their health as good, and the majority (72%) indicate having the expected weight for their height.

Also, most of the participants never smoked (65%), or smoked in the past but do not smoke currently (31%). Altogether, quality of sleep is considered good, even if there is also a high dispersion regarding this topic. Similarly, there is a great variation regarding perceived satisfaction with sexual life, having nonetheless more participants with higher (59%) than lower satisfaction.

Lastly, there is again a huge dispersion on the issue of distressing about health problems. This is at the same time probably due to participants having/not having objective health problems, but also to the relevance attributed to a healthy life. Another explanation can be linked to the higher prominence of a pessimistic or an optimistic outlook upon life, and also to the perceived quality of health itself. Indeed, the assessment of how healthy people think they are, independently of their objective diseases, has been more linked with satisfaction with life than with the presence or absence of a disease (Ailshire et al. 2011; Seligman 2008; Wang et al. 2013; Wu et al. 2013).

## Highlights, Limitations and Potentialities of the LWI Study

The participants assessed their Physical Activity satisfaction less positively than they evaluated their psychological wellbeing. They seemed less enthusiastic and less satisfied about how they Move, either with the quality or the intensity of that experience – even if the large majority chooses to practise any kind of sports or exercise – than with how they perceive themselves emotionally. They also describe having positive nutritional behaviours, but do not feel as satisfied with how they eat as they are with their emotional life. Regarding other health behaviours, the participants perceived themselves as healthy, but there was a range of sensitivities regarding the impact of illnesses in the previous year upon diverse areas of their daily lives, from work to social relationships.

Being healthier and active is a fundamental current aim for the general population, and also a significant topic for politicians, educators, and health and sports' professionals.

This is substantiated by a large amount of work related to the observation, collection of

data, and intervention to promote regular and personally adequate physical exercise around the world (Sørensen and Gill 2007; Swan and Hyland 2012; Van Hoecke et al. 2014).

The main limitations of this study are linked with the sample size. The difficulties in gathering data not only implied months of unexpected and hard investment, but also produced a very uneven sample in terms of countries, gender and the practice of physical exercise and sedentary behaviours.

The main potentialities of Study 1 are the simplicity and the robustness of the Index, its user-friendly quality, and the possibilities of its handling as an instrument of change in the direction of a better life (or the preservation of a good quality of life) for the general public. By using this Index, individuals can monitor their "Living Well" qualities and stadium along time. Moreover, they can implement several actions in order to improve particular areas. This will imply not only an individual use for monitoring in different times along the way, but also the access to a database that can be available to Gym, Personal Trainers, physical activity teachers, nutritionists and psychologists. The LWI can also allow to design baby-steps of change or sustainability of good habits for each individual. This also implies the preparation of these professionals on solution-focused approaches and pleasure/positive emotion and meaning tactics, to effectively work with change and imperishable healthy behaviours in the domains of nutrition, happiness, physical exercise and perceived impacts of illness on social participation and daily routines.

## 18.4.2  Study 2: Motivations for Physical Activity: The MOPAP

The purpose of this second study was to create an empirically validated tool that evaluates attitudes and motivations with regard to physical exercise, creating subgroup profiles. The MOPAP intends to be somehow part of the new movement and trend of personalised healthcare and costumer

health clubs' empowerment. Tailored interventions might involve the identification of distinctive uniform subgroups that will benefit from different intervention procedures (Norman and Velicer 2003). One way to classify such subgroups is to use cluster analysis to identify empirical typologies, and principal factor analysis for construct validation — both used in this study.

### 18.4.2.1  Design of the Study

Altogether, the phases of the study comprised:

- Analysis of the recent and fundamental scientific literature, and compilation of concepts, theories and studies that best explain the main motivations for physical exercise and the limitations regarding its practice and adherence. Concepts such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; exercise and wellbeing; adherence to physical exercise; self-determination; harmonious and obsessive passion for exercise; hedonic and eudaimonic happiness, habit formation, and others, were deeply investigated.
- Detailed study of other similar tools;
- Selection of a significant sample of participants with and without a health club membership, to assess the most relevant dimensions and specify motivations for physical exercise and sports (conducted in Portugal). This included the initial design of the study, the pilot test – a quantitative web-based study, using an online questionnaire (N = 50) and a qualitative study, with semi-structured interviews (N = 20);
- The subsequent development of the final questionnaire;
- Analysis of the research instruments and decisions regarding translation and retroversion for the languages spoken in each of the eight countries;
- Decisions regarding the basic theoretical concepts that now underline the final questions of the MOPAP;
- Pilot study of the questionnaire – oral pre-test and numeric pre-test – to calibrate and fine-tune the questions;
- Delivery of the MOPAP questionnaire to a sample of health club members and an open-public target population;

- Constitution and analysis of a database;
- Final data analysis, with subsequent development of consumer profiles and categories, including the design process of the final questionnaire;

#### 18.4.2.2 The Final Assessment Tool

The complete questionnaire for the final MOPAP includes questions that cover the following domains:

- Demography (seven questions)
- Appreciation of Physical Exercise (six questions)
- Physical Exercise and Wellbeing (two questions)
- Reasons for engaging in Physical Exercise (one question)
- Practice of Physical Exercise (three questions)
- Regularity of the practice of Physical Exercise (two questions)
- Preferences regarding physical activities (five questions)

#### 18.4.2.3 Sample

The majority of the participants from the final sample (N = 1177) practise regular exercise (N = 824); a group of 211 participants do exercise, but only occasionally; a smaller group (N = 100) have practised exercise in the past, but currently do not; and an even smaller sample (N = 42) has never practised physical activity or sports in their lives, being therefore disengaged from physical activity. Again, they were mainly women (68%), aged 24–72 (Mean = 41 years old).

Taking this information into consideration, three separated groups were formed:

Group I: "Current practice of physical exercise or sports"
Group II: "Never practised physical exercise or sports"
Group III: "Practised physical exercise or sports in the past but presently does not."

Due to the aim of the study, the authors decided to analyse in detail, and in the form of typologies, the data from Group I, but only to discuss tendencies from the other two less representative Groups (II and III). This implies that the final Profile was constructed on the basis of the motivations of those that exercise regularly or occasionally.

A series of analyses tested the internal and external validity of the typology. The internal validity test revealed that these clusters demonstrated high stability and replicability. Differences among clusters on self-reported exercise behaviour provided external validity evidence of the typology.

#### 18.4.2.4 Results

In the complete statistical analysis performed, the qualitative and the quantitative variables were analysed simultaneously. From that analysis, 7 significant empirical typologies emerged in Group I and in Group II, and 8 empirical type of tendencies arouse in Group III. They reflect a range of motivational patterns that will be described in detail below.

#### Group I: Motivational Profiles of the Ones Who Practise Exercise (Regularly or Occasionally)

This Group includes seven typologies of motivations for physical exercise and sports, as labelled: (1) Passion and Challenge; (2) Sociability and Balance; (3) Improvement with Support; (4) Grounded with free time/Flexibility; (5) Change Seekers; (6) Low effort/Enjoy the journey; (7) Performance. Each one of the six typologies will be addressed in the following section.

1. **Passion and Challenge**. This motivational path includes the ones for whom exercise is a passion. They are sports lovers, and are highly motivated for exercise and sports. They feel favourably energised after exercising. Being passionate is nevertheless associated with the need for challenge. Exercising brings them experiences of pleasure (be stimulated, have fun, pursue interests) and engagement. It makes them feel good about themselves, and implies experiencing a sense of emotional improvement. Also, physical activity and

sports give them a sense of growth and development, of acquiring new skills. They show interest in learning more about sports. Practicing exercise creates an awareness of commitment to purpose and meaning in their lives, aligned with being devoted to their mission. In this group, exercise is also well integrated in daily routines. When exercising, they are not motivated by better looks, improved physical health or further wellbeing. Exercise is in itself the outcome, and not a means to achieve something else.Altogether, they are truly ardent about exercising, but only about the type of exercise that makes them feel defied, in progress, and permits that they expand skills.For this group, exercise is therefore both an enjoyment and a competence-driven activity.

2. **Sociability and Balance**. This second typology of motives is associated with gender. It is a sociability and sensibility profile. In this typology are mainly included women that prefer group, dance, Body-balance, water aerobics, and Pilates' classes. This Sociability and Balance type of customer of physical exercise also enjoys walking. People in this profile prefer to exercise with others, namely family members, so the social and relational aspect is fundamental for them. Their choices regarding exercise are driven by a desire for connectedness. The contrast subgroup is therefore with male customers, which favour working out alone in bodybuilding activities (free weights, machines, cardio equipment).[1]

3. **Improvement with Support**. This is the subgroup that includes individuals that prefer to exercise with the support of a trainer or coach, and whose favourite activities involve the presence of a Personal Trainer. They want to get better at what they do while exercising, so the support of a trained professional is vital

for them. When thinking in terms of change regarding their exercise habits, they wish to exercise more, but always with a trainer/sports professional to guide them.

4. **Grounded with free time/Flexibility**. The persons included in this category are older (above 40 years old), with an employment status that allows them to have free and more flexible time (Unemployed, Housewife/ Househusband, Retired). They enjoy exercising and appreciate exercising with the support of a personal trainer or coach. They then follow closely his/her guidelines. If eager to change anything, they prefer to combine what they currently do with different and new activities, and to begin doing outdoors workouts.

   This specific subgroup contrasts with a younger type of persons (less than 40 years old) that are employed, students or working-students, or occupy their time with voluntary work. As hypothesised, these occupations are time-consuming, eventually not allowing for flexible timetables and limiting the opportunities to relish physical exercise as a leisure activity. This contrast group also prefers not to have the support of a coach or personal trainer, and wants to use that support only when they intentionally ask for help.

5. **Change Seekers/unsatisfied**. This cluster includes the ones that want to change their physical exercise patterns. They either do not exercise regularly, or do it less than three times a week. Therefore, this group of persons that exercise a reduced amount of time, and are not satisfied with their patterns, say they want to change as soon as possible; they are so prone to change, that they are ready to begin shifting next month something in their practice of physical exercise. In particular, they are motivated to exercise much more than they currently do. Those are the ones easier to engage, eventually, since they are already motivated for change and recognise that, among other changes, they want to exercise more. This pattern is not present in all the eight countries. It only arose in Austria, Germany, Greece, Poland and Switzerland.

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[1]In this typology there is an association with height. Being less than 173 centimetres differentiates between the type who love the more collective, Body-Balance, Pilates and Dance activities, from those who do not. One explanation for this result is gender: women are usually shorter than men, which might explain the presence of this characteristic in the present subgroup.

The contrast cluster is with the ones who exercise frequently (from three to at least eight times a week) and are not willing to change anything in their exercise routines. Thus, the ones that already exercise frequently are not interested in any change in their activity routines. This last subgroup emerged more closely associated to the following countries: Czech Republic, Portugal, and Spain.

6. **Low effort/enjoy the journey**. In this subgroup, individuals clearly prefer activities related to water. Swimming and water aerobics are two of the most practised and appreciated activities. They also prefer low effort exercises and say that they believe they are not able to succeed in physical activities. Therefore, competence issues might also be present when this cluster is dominant. This is a subgroup of people who are not so young − they are older than 39 years old. This cluster emerged only in Portugal, Greece and Spain. It seems that these persons are not confident about their physical capacities for the practice of exercise or sports, and therefore they choose activities that put less stress on the body, which include mainly water workouts and pool exercises.

7. **Performance**. This last cluster integrates customers that exercise frequently, and do not mind to be bothered while exercising (by a coach, a Personal Trainer…). This pattern is typically more present in central Europe, namely in Check Republic, Germany, and Switzerland. One hypothesis is that this is a subgroup interested in investing and getting better at what they do when they exercise, which means that having external support might be a way to get better results. The difference regarding the third typology ("Improvement with Support"), as far as data can tell, might be the intensity of the exercise. This current and last subgroup ("Performance") is comprised of people that already exercise frequently, which seem not to be the case with the third group. In fact, that type of person who wants to improve with support wants to exercise more, so the desired encouragement might have different intentions and

motivations. The contrast cluster (the ones that exercise less frequently and do not want to be bothered while exercising) is more common in countries like Austria, Poland, Portugal, Greece, and Spain.

We now analyse Group II, that integrates data from the participants that never practised physical exercise or sports, and detail in the text below the results that surfaced in the current study.

Regarding the sample of participants that never practise exercise, we now present some tendencies that emerged in data analysis. As discussed, the sample size (N = 42) did not allow for a detailed and discriminated typology, so we just discuss the most relevant motivational factors. Larger samples will permit more in-depth and trustable profiles.

Seven dimensions or profile predispositions emerged. We did not label them since they are only tendencies that emerged from a small sample. We present them below.

1. The first subgroup indicated people that do not like to exercise at all. They are therefore disengaged and not motivated for the practice of any sports or physical activity. They do not like the physical challenge, and would easily find all kind of excuses for not exercising. They do not associate physical exercise with pleasure, feeling good, passion, better emotions, engagement, energy, organisation, or health. If they would be considering beginning any kind of physical activity, the motivational drive would be to manage stress. The more they believe that exercise can help them cope with daily tensions, the more they assess physical exercise as potentially positive. Interesting enough, their impetus is not to improve their looks or to be accepted by others. Those are definitely not reasons that will prompt physical activity in this cluster of persons, so self-acceptance might be more relevant than others' acceptance, which is aligned with Ryff's model of eudaimonic wellbeing (2015).

2. The second cluster of tendencies inside this group of people that never practised physical

exercise comprises the ones that are eventually interested in doing some kind of exercise in the future, driven by the wish to develop and improve skills. They are also interested in being with other people that practise the same kind of activity, so they have a social motivation, but are nevertheless afraid not to be able to succeed in any activity. Most of them are married. Actually, in this second category, the ones that are single or cohabiting are less interested and less motivated to begin exercising.

3. In the third cluster there is a group of people saying that they do not care at all if others criticise or disapprove of them, so they will never exercise for reasons of approval or to avoid being criticised. This propensity is higher for younger, more educated and employed customers, with a higher income.

4. Next, the study found a subgroup of persons that are mainly male, with a low income, retired, student or working-student, who also believe they might not be able to succeed in practising sports, and are not interested in practising it to learn new skills or improve.

5. The fifth cluster brings up again a subgroup of people with characteristics that are linked with demographic variables, like weight, height, income, employment status.[2] They believe that exercising will help them feel more energetic, improve or acquire new skills, or socialise with others that can share the same activities. So, there are various types of motivations associated to this subgroup.

6. This subgroup has the presence of demographic variables as even more relevant. Socio-economic status and family characteristics (number or persons in the household, employment status…) interfere with the reasons for not exercising. Nevertheless, this is a subgroup that indicates that they like to practise physical activities, and would be interested in doings them – to

feel healthier and to improve physical and emotional wellbeing. Contextual factors external to them seem to limit their capacity to begin the practice of physical exercise or sports.

7. The final cluster that emerged is also an interesting and intriguing one. It is a group that gives a diversity of excuses not to exercise (for instance, with the need to be more organised to be able to include physical activities in their lives, or/and with mission in life), but that have a clear consciousness about their need to manage weight. It is the only group where one health problem appears as an independent factor: cardiovascular disease. The higher the consciousness of the need to manage weight, the more excuses appear.

Finally, we analyse Group III, which includes participants who practised physical exercise in the past but presently do not. Again, the list of comments that follow only addresses tendencies, due to sample size. Eight clusters surfaced.

1. The first includes people that, the more they like and feel motivated for physical exercise, the more they see benefits in it – from managing stress to aligning life with mission and purpose, feeling the passion associated, enjoying the relevance of having exercise well integrated in their lives, feeling the pleasure, the engagement, the energy, the good emotions, and even the challenge and pleasure of improving themselves. The fact that they have already practised sports or exercise in the past might imply that they know its benefits. They recognise and savour its positive impact. The only thing is that… they just do not do it.

2. The second cluster includes persons interested in returning to the practice of physical activity who give a wide range of reasons not to do so. They say they like activities that are challenging, and that they want to learn new skills, but advocate fear of injury; they justify their disengagement by not having anyone to do the activities with; they validate their behaviour explaining that they do not have a health club

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[2]This is a very different scenario from the drives that emerged in the group of people that do practise exercise, where those demographic factors almost did not emerge.

facility nearby; they even justify the fact of not practising physical exercise or sports with not having adequate transportation to get to a sports facility. Interestingly, the reasons they list are neither reasons linked with health nor time managing issues. The analysis of the demographic indicators show a specific link with marital status: mainly, people in this subgroup are divorced. It will be interesting to explore if these are valid arguments not to exercise, or just a compilation of self-soothing justifications.

3. The third subgroup includes people who are not at all interested in coming back to the practice of exercise. In this cluster, there seems to be an association with the need to prevent injuries. These persons are not interested in exercising regularly, and they only envision, eventually, the practice of walking. There is also a tendency to say that they will feel embarrassed if other people watch them exercise. Several psychological dimensions are present in this assemblage, and need to be addressed as such.

4. The fourth cluster typifies a group of people that want to change to a pattern of exercise that implies workout at home (50% of the respondents). They also defend emphatically that they will not reinitiate physical activity to please others or avoid their critique. Again, household income plays a role here, as much as weight.

5. This subgroup prefers to walk and opinions are divided regarding appreciation of dance. The more they like to walk, the more they like to dance. Having a personal trainer is also a leaning motivation for the persons inside this clutch.

6. The cluster that arose in the sixth place is another interesting one: persons that are clearly happy with their lives, and considering to exercise again, although they cannot motivate themselves to do it. They also tend to have weight problems. These persons might be easily motivated to go back to sports or any kind of physical activity. Using their elevated subjective wellbeing can be a good platform to encourage change. The ones who feel happier about their lives are usually more prone to change and experiment new things.

7. The seventh cluster combines those who favour walking and fitness group classes with the presence of a Personal Trainer or coach. This subgroup of persons has another important thing in common: they say they have no time to exercise, that family and working responsibilities do not allow them to practise physical activities, and that they have no one to go along with them. They are nevertheless motivated to learn more about sports, and develop more skills, as much as enhance a sense of growth. They are willing to change soon, if external conditions allow them to reinitiate physical activities. This seems to be a subpopulation on the verge to change.

8. At last, a final subgroup of people is clearly thinking about going back to the regular practice of physical activity, but have not been able to motivate themselves into action. They prefer to exercise with a Personal Trainer, they like cycling, and they indicate that when they used to practise physical activities, they felt energised. The practice of exercise also used to help them develop and learn.

They are willing to change, if only they could… but clearly not without help. This pattern is more prevalent in Austria, Germany and Portugal, underscoring the potential of culture specificity, aligned with individual specificity.

## Highlights, Limitations and Potentialities of the MOPAP Study

The sample size is, again, a limitation of this second study. This is especially relevant regarding the groups of people that never exercised in their whole lives, and in the group of persons that used to exercise, but who do not anymore. This sample size influenced the decisions regarding statistical analysis and final options, not allowing for the creation of typologies in Groups II and III.

The sample is also not representative in what concerns countries' distribution, gender and other demographic characteristics, which limit conclusions and analysis.

One of the strongest virtues of this MOPAP is that it is empirically supported in peoples' motives.

Hopefully this profile will allow professionals dedicated to physical activities and sports to take action in terms of tailored responses (and not one-size-fits-all) that will enhance adherence and initiation of the practice of physical activity.

In what concerns the motivations for physical exercise, the resulting typologies reflect a range of motivational configurations that are likely to be responsive to different types of messages and strategies regarding adoption and preservation of regular exercise. The typologies generated by the answers of the panelists participating in the final web-based research also breeds a number of hypotheses about the identified clusters that can be empirically tested in further studies.

It is worth noting that more traditional motivations for exercising, like losing weight, dealing with diseases, managing stress, and others that seem frequently addressed by marketers nowadays, did not seem particularly relevant for our sample, in special for the persons that currently practise exercise. Maintaining or improving well-being and health were the most relevant reasons argued to justify practising exercise, therefore addressing the issue in a more positive tone than dealing with problems or difficulties. Learning how to deal with these different types of motives (evading or attraction drivers) seems therefore vital to promote regular and satisfying physical activity. This is an interesting topic in what concerns strategies to engage people in sustainable exercise practices.

Other psychological factors, such as the need for sociability, or the belief that one cannot be good and competent at the practice of exercise, clearly emerged and should be taken into consideration in what concerns adopting and preserving regular exercise.

Exercise habit formation has been studied thoroughly, and still needs to be the focus of physical activity research. Nevertheless, monitoring personal indicators can help promote consciousness about the issue, and position professionals to support customers in the best way possible.

Alongside, the longing for change in exercise patterns, in particular in frequency or place of the workouts, or in returning to the practice of sports and physical activities, in the specific case of the ones that have discontinued exercise, is again an important arena to differentiate individuals' drives and diversify the motivational proposals, so that the person associates exercising with positive emotions and meaning, therefore enhancing the probability of preserving in that particular practice.

The MOPAP study also lists some specific proposals that those who want to motivate others to regularly exercise should have into consideration. If the individual motives are, as anticipated, clearly diverse, the cultural typologies can also be idiosyncratic. The campaigns and methods valid for some countries and places might not be adequate nor binding for others.

Subsequently, the MOPAP questionnaire's results lead the path to some other reflections. The first one underscores, in the group of persons that practise exercise, that water activities can be a potent differentiator of motives for exercising. Either people loved them or disliked them undoubtedly. The second worth-noticing conclusion is how low impact activities (walking, dancing…), and specific spaces, like home, appear to be more appealing to the ones that have stopped exercising. Thirdly, liking or disliking the practice of exercise or sports seems important for those who have discontinued exercise or who have never tried it. Taking into consideration the immense array of options for physical activity, it might be possible to invite people to experiment very low impact exercises until they find the one that satisfies them and gets them into flow. A flexible and trial-and-error method can enhance the probability of initiating or restarting physical activity.

Aggregating all drivers, we found the following major nine dimensions that infuse the motivational aspirations and inform the diverse profiles: Fun; Performance; Competence; Frequency of exercise; Support versus Working out alone; Me versus We; Age; Gender; and Place.

Psychological and communicational strategies are probably as important as the technicalities about how to work out or exercise, if not more. Knowing the best way to lead a Yoga class or a spinning class, or to help a client with an abdominal machine is as important as knowing health club and sport's actual or potential clients in a more precise way, understanding their motives and using those motives as a strategy to enhance their cravings for healthy, harmonious and sustained exercise.

The MOPAP questionnaire can and should also be used to deepen the Move Well domains of the Live Well Index. When a person fills out the Live Well Index, and the results indicate a low score in the Move Well dimension, the person can complete the MOPAP to better understand the motives and aspirations in the physical activity domain. Therefore, an ongoing process of gathering data and analysing that bulk of data every 6 months will allow us to have a dynamic process, with several measurements over time, instead of a "photograph" of the reality. The following of a sample of practitioners so as to assess the Index and its eventual fluctuations added the possibility of including other questions/variables, depending on the results of larger samples. Also, future research should study the use of this tool in order to understand and inform about the main demands and requisites of the trainees and clients in order to promote and sustain positive changes, and therefore enhance the retention rates.

As examples, health clubs can hold open days for people to experiment different activities, with a social link as a steer (bringing a friend, a colleague, a family member), which might help those who are more reticent to begin exercising, or the ones that have a social motivation. Going to their working places – factories, offices, shops – and making the experience positively memorable from an emotional and relational point of view might also help to adapt to people's aspirations. After inviting them to complete the MOPAP, and hopefully expanding their consciousness about motives, impediments, and future visions regarding physical exercise, it can help physical activity professionals in creating a better support for their customers and students.

## 18.5   Conclusions

The overreaching objectives of the studies presented in this chapter were (a) to contribute to the literature and measurement on health-related quality of life and, in particular, to what it is to live well, accentuating a physically active life; (b) to integrate cross-national perceptions and cultural specificities regarding 8 European countries; (c) to develop a measure that can help identify (and be used to foster) life with quality using a simple, short, but valid tool (1st Study); and (d) to help promote the initiation and adherence to the practice of physical exercise through the development of a brief and simple measure, that helps designing tailored exercise (2nd Study).

The two studies analysed bring forward an empirical discussion upon a pre-defined set of health-related indicators – physical exercise, nutrition, psychological wellbeing and perceived health – that help operationalise, integrate and measure some of the dimensions considered relevant for a good life. Both studies developed tools for measuring, in a simple, cost-effective, but comprehensive way, a life with quality and, in particular, addressed specific and approachable profiles revering aspirations and drives for exercise.

The aim was also to mature knowledge regarding opportunities for personal self-knowledge and growth in each area and for the identification of internal and external resources through which individuals can manage their lives better, pursuing their goals, and sustaining their engagement in physical exercise.

Over the last few years, the general public, as well as institutional and national policymakers, have demonstrated a growing interest and commitment to the outcomes of the happiness and wellbeing extensive scientific agenda. The same is happening around physical exercise, nutrition and habit formation research. This implies a growing responsibility for scholars to

develop theoretical models, measurement tools, and promotional programs that are both rigorous and socially relevant. Often, produced models and findings are too abstract to be still applicable to individual and collective circumstances (Di Martino et al. in press). This means that helping to create user-friendly instruments that can track straightforwardly the basic determinants of the good life is worth pursuing.

Even if these studies apparently disregard the existence, distribution, and management of resources and opportunities in the environment, the authors would like to propose, in the future, that studies on these topics take into consideration a contextual nature of the good life. Taking care of our own happiness should never, in any circumstances, have a negative impact on others nor on the physical and psycho-social environment. For instance, the type of foods we choose to eat or the type of sports we elect to practise ought to incorporate the acknowledgement of their impact on the planet and the common good. The same happens with sports inequalities, in terms of gender, age, wealth, provision of infrastructures and others (Van Tuyckom et al. 2010).

Strategic and policy objectives to increase sport participation and the sustained habit of physical exercise involve advancing future directions and tools for general assessment, intervention and promotion of the good life and of the affectively positive and harmonious physical activity in particular (Hutchinson 2011). Also, there needs to be a clear vision of the fundamental personal and collective issues at stake, overcoming the limitations of a Cartesian's approach to different disciplines and domains, and reflecting upon the personal and collective pursuit of the good. The current approach recognises the urgency to do research which is deep-rooted in a tradition of prevention, personal growth, and wellness promotion, with wellness as a focus over psychopathology, and prevention and promotion as primacies over treatment (Di Martino et al. in press; Riff et al. 2015a).

An expanded research agenda for the future needs to bring forward improved knowledge on how these health-specific attributes affect persons and society at the micro and macro-level, with

social action and cultural diversity at its core. This calls for a contextual and value-driven perspective, hence enduring the primordial ethos of the quality of life movement and the compliance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, namely the Good-Health and Wellbeing indicator (UNDP 2016).

One cannot lose the audacity of science, but one cannot lose the lucidity of ethics.

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# "Before the Early Darkness, But Not Alone Please": Patterns of Physical Activity in Public and Private Spaces and Quality of Life in Post-apartheid South Africa

# 19

## Anand Singh

**Abstract**

This chapter is a reflexive and researched account of a living experience that focuses upon juxtaposing conditions in a society still divided by race and class. It is about middle class South Africans who are vivaciously conscious about maintaining their quality of life against the numerous odds that characterise South Africa's contemporary socio-political conditions. "Quality of life" in this context is reference to the ubiquitous adoption and maintenance of western norms of lifestyles. It is seen in the architectural designs of the homes, the spatialized suburban based shopping malls that mark a significant shift away from conventional styled central business districts (CBDs), and gymnasiums that are centrally situated to target the captive markets of surrounding suburban complexes. Like other middle classes throughout the world, quality of lifestyle in South Africa is about working hard to remain within the precincts of congenial environments that encourages upward mobility. But unlike other countries, there

prevails a passionate boundedness against the unknown in their public and private living spaces, supported by a significant enhancement in the use of electronic wireless social networks through mobile/cell phones). South Africa's current spate of violence in middle class areas is perceivably about underclass thefts and attacks' from the well-endowed middle class segments. But the realities are beyond such simplicities. Vigilance, more than vigilantism, against such attacks, has brought people together from across racial divides, from an era of racial rigidity that was once unthinkable. They are collectively engaged in safeguarding not only property and possessions but a "quality of life" that is characteristically 'South African'.

## 19.1 Introduction

In South Africa 'quality of life' studies must be viewed against the intertwining notions of racial privileges and emulations of Eurocentric middle class backgrounds. The fight against apartheid was essentially a fight for a quality of life that the once most favoured segment, viz. Whites, enjoyed under White hegemony. While such

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quality of life also prevailed among the other categories of Coloureds, Indians and Africans, there prevailed further segmentation among these less advantaged groups as well. But the segments among these groups with relatively higher qualities of life remained proportionately smaller than their White counterparts. The fight against apartheid was for a quality of life that was akin to what middle class Whites enjoyed. With introspection, White middle class lifestyle was and remains an emulation of middle class qualities of life in developed western nations. In the rhetoric of anti-apartheid movements, the fight against apartheid was essentially a transcendence of materialistic and psychological barriers. In several respects, this equated to a fight for similar material conditions which in effect would translate into improved senses of psychological confidence. However, the failure of post-apartheid governance to rapidly spread the advantages of an improved quality of life for a wider segment of the marginalised masses has continued to reproduce mindsets that are reminiscent of the past. South Africa's unstoppable urbanisation through the proliferation of squatter camps and degenerate state provisioned low cost housing is creating a solution-less quagmire for national politicians, regional policy makers and planners. Against the backdrop of an annualised economic growth rate of less than 1% over the last few years and a virtual stagnation in creative ideas for state induced employment, the chances of an improved quality of life for South Africa's marginalised majority remains even more bleak. This is why studies in quality of life remain subjective and relative to fundamental issues such as individual proclivities, environmental conditions, commitment among the political leadership in countries and the role of international players in developing countries. While Veenhoven (2001, 2007) renowned 'four qualities of life' research model incorporates a broad spectrum of all of the above, it was instructive to Mariano Rojas's (nd) comparative studies of 20 South American and Caribbean countries. Rojas's broadly statistical research focused upon macro-economic situa-

tions, the countries' wealth and their distribution, social expenditures, and political and legal governance and links to their qualities of life. Against generally low levels of 'life satisfaction' and 'life appreciation', Rojas stressed the need for more serious levels of state intervention to improve the qualities of life in the respective twenty countries. Tonon (2007) adopts a more limited twofold approach. To Tonon for instance, the study of quality of life refers to the material and psychosocial environment, recognizing the social and psychological spheres of well-being, the latter corresponding to the experience and evaluation that people make of their situation, which includes positive and/or negative and a global vision of their life called 'vital satisfaction'. Another more subjective approach to 'quality of life' was paired off by Susniene and Jurkauskas (2009) when they attempted to understand the notion by establishing how 'happiness' served as a corollary to the concept. In a racially and ethnically diverse country such as South Africa, the quality of life too is determined by core issues of state expenditure and political and legal governance. The core issues of happiness, life satisfaction and life appreciation are determined by political realities that are hardly different to what prevails in South American and Caribbean countries.

One of the hallmarks of South Africa's economic progress has been a comparatively large, stable and successful middle class. This segment has remained an enviable achievement to the rest of Africa, especially since the quality of life that they were able to create and maintain bore favourable resemblance to the middle class comforts that were characteristic of Western Europe and other developed western nations of the world. "Middle class Whites" in the context of this paper is reference to relatively affluent populations with affordability to good education, health care, housing, technological equipment and a lifestyle above the discomforts of persevering marginalised lower classes. Quoting Easterly (2001), Banerji and Duflo (2008) for instance refer to a number of extensively cited economists writings

that create such an expectant perception of the 'middle class' image globally. Referring to Easterly (2001), though not necessarily in uncritical agreement with the paper, they raise awareness about a pertinent point that as long as a country is not too ethnically diverse, upward economic mobility is more easily achieved (see also Acemoglu and Zilibotti 1997; Landes 1998; Birdsall et al. 2002; Frederick 2002; Doepke and Zilibotti 2005; Easterly 2007). During colonialism and apartheid South Africa was administered as a country for Whites, notwithstanding the internal ethnic diversity among themselves, including Afrikaners (descendants of mainly Dutch, French and German migrants since the seventeenth century), and people of English, Portuguese, Greek and Italian descent. In terms of the 1950 Group Areas Act, with Whites, Coloureds, Indian and "Bantu" (African/Black) taking such a descending order, Whites were the biggest benefactors of the economic development in South Africa until the demise of apartheid. But despite the changes since 1994, Fairuz Gaibie (2010), used the 2008 South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS) with 3321 adults from randomly selected households in an assessment of how South Africans rate their quality of life. In assessing three core issues: happiness, life satisfaction and optimism, he found that "*Black African respondents were the unhappiest and most dissatisfied with life but at the same time the most optimistic about the future.*" In Gauteng Province, Joseph and Culwick's (2015) biannual Quality of Life survey collated information from 30,000 interviews. Their purpose was to glean information from respondents on the roles of national, regional and local government structures in their perceptions and impact upon quality of life. In their eventual assessment, their findings showed that satisfaction levels dropped marginally, but dissatisfaction levels dropped more significantly from 2013, reflected especially in the index representing the marginalised living in low income housing and squatter camps. The collective works of Valerie Møller, three of which are cited here (2007a, b, 2012), shares resonance with the papers referenced above. Focussing upon the almost two decades prior to apartheid and post-apartheid transformation and post the 1994 democratic elections, her work illustrated the disparities in the subjective factors of satisfaction, happiness and perceptions after the euphoria of the elections ended. The since-then African majority government in South Africa and the African masses began raising issues of disparities in basic social service delivery. Much of this has now translated in mass based social movements, visible through their country wide protests. But together with these levels of unhappiness and dissatisfaction, a state of siege through violent crime now prevails as an endemic menace. The marginalised often feel no connection to the infrastructural developments that has already been established.

South Africa's achievements were visible in their road construction and town planning in their cities and towns. Three to five lane national highways that are fully tarred and well maintained, connecting bridges and roads to towns and neighbouring localities, brightly lit urban streets at night glowing over tarred and paved roads, developed beachfronts with internationally acceptable facilities, and well provisioned schools and tertiary institutions that are designed to meet the aspirations of the working, middle and upper classes, have served as signature achievements to South Africa's status as the most developed state in Africa. But the country had become infamous for its policies of legislated discrimination and a pariah nation in the eyes of a world determined to confront racism in its varying forms and disguises. Against the background of the racialized privileges that were inherent during the colonial and apartheid eras, the largest segment of the middle classes were found amongst those who were classified as "White".[1] Smaller segments

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[1]Reference to racial categories is not intended as descriptive categories, but with reference to the Population Registration Act of 1950. It however remains an important reference point when discussing socio-political conditions in South Africa.

were also found amongst Indians in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and among Coloureds in the two provinces of the Eastern and Western Cape.[2] Despite being the overwhelming majority in the country, constituting more than 80% of the population, the sizes of African middle and upper classes were significantly disproportionate to the other classified groups. A BusinessTech website posting on August 29, 2016, cited a City Press estimation by University of Cape Town marketing professor, John Simpson (BusinessTech 2016) illustrated how the African middle class has grown to 5.81 million. The size of the African middle class is estimated to have trebled over the 12 years ending in 2016. But not enough is known about them yet in South Africa, while White privilege, and to a lesser extent Indian and Coloured privilege remains at the forefront of the country's class based make up. Being "middle class" in South Africa does not necessarily imply a lifestyle of comforts and achievements that is commonly perceived of, as Visagie's (2013) recent research has shown. Being a part of the middle earning category in South Africa does not translate into relatively easy access to quality education, health care and domestic conveniences. Visagie's research has shown that a vast majority of those belonging to the middle stream income group realistically remain indigent, especially through the enormity of the responsibilities that income generators in households have to carry.

It is in this disproportion that White hegemonic rule over South Africa failed to find support among the African masses. The fight against apartheid by the disenfranchised majority was essentially a fight against having to live under poorly resourced and undignified areas. It was and still remains a fight for a better quality of life. The post-apartheid state's difficulties in spreading out the wealth of the nation is failing

to convince the marginalised masses that the state is either creative enough or sincere about raising the standards of life for the majority. Ongoing protest action against the state's failure to meet the demands of service delivery in every sector and in every province is an indication of the prevalent levels of frustration and anger against the state. Roets (2015), in an attack against a *Mail and Guardian* journalist, provides seven reasons why the lack of service delivery to Africans can no longer be blamed on White privilege of the past. His references to statistics often cite national Ministers of State for collusion in corrupt practices as evidence for state failures in service deliveries. In unrelated related research to Roets, Bhardwaj (2016) cited several other independent sources that resonate with one another – that South Africa experiences at least 30 service delivery protest actions per day. While this figure has been challenged there is still no conformation about what the real number of protests are per day in relation to service delivery. In a 3-month (90-day) period this amounts to approximately 3000 protests. The year 2016 would have recorded some of the highest number of protest actions in the history of South Africa. But a more realistic account of the frequency of social protests in South Africa is an average of one every 2 days. However true or false the former figure may be, the debate around these issues confirms the enormity of the challenges in the contemporary state of the nation in South Africa. Most of these protest actions emanate from the squatter camps that are close to middle class suburban areas, where work and food are presumed to be within easy reach. But not always is this reach simply through work and remuneration alone.

The unbridled proliferation of squatter camps close to suburban areas are presently challenging the established and entrenched quality of life that Whites, Coloureds and Indians enjoyed over most of the twentieth century. Individually architectured dwellings with comforts that are unreachable to the residents of squatter camps are swiftly turning into zones of theft and violent

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[2]While the province of KwaZulu-Natal has the biggest concentration of People of Indian Origin (PIOs), the provinces of Eastern and Western Cape has significant numbers of Coloureds (People of Mixed Descent). But people from both categories are also found in smaller numbers in other provinces as well.

attacks against residents. "Estate living", where independent homes are constructed within high walled fences that are either barb wired, metal spiked or electrified, has become a swiftly growing alternative for people who want to avoid the risks of feeling isolated and vulnerable in independent properties. The latter too are now characterised by similar patterns of fencing, often backed up by aggressive dogs, heavy metal burglar guarded windows and doors, monitored alarms systems and armed responses by private security firms, closed circuit television cameras, and guns. South Africa now has at least 9000 registered private security companies with at least 400,000 registered security guards to their operations. The registered security guards now outnumber the permanent staff of the South African Police Services (SAPS) and the military. But encouraged by the attractive climatic conditions and with vested interests that can be traced back several generations, South Africa's "nonblack" middle classes are steadfast in their determination to protect the quality of life to which they have grown accustomed and to remain in the country because of the hope they still have in it. There is an awareness of the social inequalities of the past in the years of White hegemony and legislated discrimination, as well as the problems of competently managing the challenges of transformation by the post-apartheid African majority government. Social inequality is visible through the high standards of middle and upper class lifestyles, against the meagre and indigent lifestyles in neighbouring squatter camps. Squatter camps are essentially slum areas with impermanent and poorly built shelters in high density conditions, often established through land invasions on public and privately owned land. It is within these contexts that the polar opposites of the *haves and the have-nots* that the quality of life among middle-classes in South Africa must be understood. A reflexive case study of Westville, a borough in the city of Durban, serves to illustrate the subjective levels of 'satisfaction' and 'happiness' below. It is through the dynamics of utilising public spaces through jogging and hiking,

'gyming and malling' that these levels of 'satisfaction' can be viewed. But it is through the proactive community interventions through private security, community patrolling and social networking through wireless technology, that the subjectivity of South African middle class life styles must be understood against indigent peoples growing impatience for improvement in their qualities of life.

## 19.2 Public Spaces

Occupation and uses of public spaces in postapartheid South Africa must be viewed against the juxtaposing attitudes that reflect the past and present initiatives by both the state and local communities. They are characterised by integrated as well as almost racially exclusive spaces. In both instances they are defined by the racial rigidity of the past and the transformative efforts of the present that are intended to deracialise public spaces in commercial areas and living spaces in suburban areas. While legislative enactments now prohibit discriminatory practices that are racially insensitive, the disaggregation across commercial and private living spaces are unlikely to integrate in ways that will make non-racialism a 'sooner-rather than-later' reality. In commercial areas entry as entrepreneurs are determinately through capital strengths and business acumen. The same principle of financial strength applies to living in middle class areas. By its very nature financial strength serves as an imposing factor against those unable to either enter as entrepreneurs or as residents in socially insulated communities. But while many acquire rights to enter into such spaces as employees, others enter either as habitual criminals or opportunistic thieves and violent attackers. As a pervasive problem in South Africa vigilance has become a new feature of neighbourhoods that are characterised by high walls and minimal neighbourly contact. It is against this background that both ad hoc and planned measures against such dilemmas are taken to ensure the maintenance and sustainability

of a quality of life reflective of middle class comforts, but which remain too farfetched for those living within the confines of destitution and marginality.

At least three visible areas in middle class life-styles, though not exclusive to them, provide insights into how quality of life in the middle to upper class suburb of Westville is lived, maintained and protected. It is through hiking, jogging, 'gyming and malling' that public spaces are utilised and claimed as spaces for the public good, and it is through patrolling and social networking in these public spaces that private spaces are protected and safeguarded against the vagrancy that prevails as a perennial threat to their quality of life. The dynamics of these activities provide insights into why the notion of 'quality of life' in post-apartheid South Africa must be viewed against persistent social inequalities and political realities.

## 19.3    Hiking and Jogging

Hiking and jogging in Westville must be understood against the physical features that are characteristic of the area. As an integral part of the city of Durban, the topography in Westville is equally characterised by undulating roads and properties. Its hilly inclines and declines and subtropical vegetation marks a distinct difference to its hinterland geographical features of generally flat plateau like landscapes and savanna grasslands. The area's warm temperate east coast climate provides for hot and humid summers, and cooler periods that makes any day with temperatures below 15 °, "a cold day". Despite the discomfort levels during summer, the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, and generally bright and sunny conditions most of the year, makes Westville and the broader city of Durban an attractive place to live in. Morning and afternoon hiking and jogging as 'keep fit' routines by residents in Westville are widespread. Its spread and frequency are indicative of a society that values

an active lifestyle. However, contemporary patterns of jogging and hiking, especially before sunrise and after dark, have been substantially reduced over the last decade. Numerous familiar faces in the suburb have either changed their times or have shifted their exercise schedules to gymnasiums. Responses from two residents somewhat captures the current mood in the area:

> *"Ever since my wife was threatened by a knife wielding man in her afternoon walk with my two year old son in the carriage in February last year (2015), and one of our neighbours was attacked in his early morning jog, we decided to stop the neighbourhood exercising. The problem is that you cannot stop anybody from walking on the road, and the guys that attack people are unknown to us. So apprehending them is really difficult if there isn't anybody there to help you. This is why I say to all who want to use these public spaces: "Please do not go out on hikes and jogs alone, and do not go out when it's dark or when the streets are quiet. But if they can afford it, switch to the gym. It's safer and better."*
>
> *"I always preferred walking with my dogs just before sunrise, it's the best time to walk. I have been doing this for more than 20 years, since I came to live in Westville in 1998. Ya, I heard about it being dangerous, but sometimes we have to wait until it happens to us. I was caught one morning around quarter-to-five – didn't know these two black guys were hiding behind the side of the bus shelter. They hit my head and hand so hard that my dog was shocked and ran away, and I almost fainted with fright. They stuck a gun to my head and took my cell phone and some money. At that time of day I don't carry my wallet because I have all my bank cards and driver's license in it. I stopped walking for more than six months after that. When I recovered after three months I started going to the gym. But I don't like it there. So now I do my walking after 7am when the children are going to school, or around 4.30 pm when people are returning from work…I just like to walk alone because it makes me think better."*

Dark times' morning and evening hiking and jogging in Westville has become a rarity since rapid escalations in criminal activities in the suburb over the last 2 years. The pattern of public exercising changed to later hours in the mornings from between 7 and 9 am and in the afternoons to

between 4 and 6.30 pm – contingent upon the time of year and weather conditions. While this has constituted a significant shift away from the previous times of exercising, it has become an equally rare sight to see individuals, especially women, either hiking or jogging alone. It has become normative to engage in either activity with more than one person. In several instances individuals were either armed with guns carefully concealed in the backs, or ensured that their dogs accompanied them on leashes. Dogs are considered to be their first lines of defence against possible attacks on the roads.

Gymnasiums in South Africa have followed the pattern of western developed countries in their equipment layouts, types of exercises, and centralised locations. Most of them occupy significant areas of shopping malls or major sports complexes, making them one-stop facilities for patrons. Shopping malls, by the very nature of their architectural designs, are compact structures that have several advantages in the control of criminal activities (see also Clegg et al. 2000). Firstly, the rentals that are charged to tenants substantially increases operational costs, necessitating the substantial mark-ups to items that are sold; secondly, closed circuit television coupled with visible policing has an inhibiting effect against those inclined to pickpocket, engage in hold-ups or steal from shops; and thirdly, the costly nature of shopping in such enclaves creates an exclusivism around them, keeping out more indigent shoppers and troublesome hangouts and exercise them too. The paved roads encourages hiking and jogging, but the undulating nature of the topography is prohibitive to cycling.

## 19.4    "Gyming and Malling"

"Gyming and malling" as a localised colloquial concept are more likely to be an idea that was instantaneously made up or restrictive to a few whose communication pattern is best understood

by the group that they constitute. In February 2016 in a health food delicatessen situated in a popular mall in Westville three uninhibited women once spoke audibly about their lifestyles as residents of the suburb. Some of their statements captured the very essence of this paper. It was clear from what they spoke that they were not a regular social group, although it was equally clear that they were more than mere acquaintances to one another. Their conversation piqued my curiosity as they described the frequency with which they exercised in the gymnasium and shopped at the respective mall. Three successive statements by each of them somewhat captured the specificity of interests among residents of the suburb and the general trend of the South African middle class mind-set:

> "It's so good to see you here for a change. I'm here at least four to five times a week from about mid-day…after gym I do my shopping and fetch my daughter from school at quarter-to-three. But sometimes, like today, I come a little early. The gym, the supermarkets and the school are just so convenient… just five minutes drive away from home."
> "I gym and mall everyday if I can help it. I avoid jogging because it's just so dangerous on the roads alone. There's a great atmosphere here in the mall. With all the people here and the security it's just so safe."
> "You guys are lucky to be gyming and malling so often like this. I have to be away from home most days of the week, flying all over the country. So weekends at home is catch up time – with cleaning and family, and just chilling at home. Today is just my lucky day to able to come here at this time. So when I have the time for gym at this time of day, I just enjoy it."

The emphasis in each of the statements above was about being able to exercise in a gym. But two out of the three of them emphasised safety and security as prime reasons for use of the gymnasium. Its location within the shopping mall served an added convenience to those wanting to exercise and shop without further discomforts. Supermarkets and gymnasiums have become complimentary partners to the lifestyles of middle class South Africans. They represent

two important aspects of class bounded lifestyles in most countries. First, they represent a connectivity to ways of life that that are unknown to the larger segment of South Africa's population by sheer lack of affordability; and second, they provide an association for the middle classes with a lifestyle that resonates with the development patterns of the USA and Western Europe.

Gymnasiums in South Africa have followed the pattern of western developed countries in their equipment layouts, types of exercises, and centralised locations. Most of them occupy significant spaces of shopping malls or major sports complexes, making them one-stop facilities for patrons. Shopping malls, by the very nature of their architectural designs, are compact structures that have several advantages in the control of criminal activities. Firstly, the rentals that are charged to tenants substantially increases operational costs, necessitating substantial markups to items that are sold; secondly, closed circuit television coupled with visible policing has an inhibiting effect against those inclined to pickpocket, engage in hold-ups or steal from shops; and thirdly, the costly nature of shopping in such enclaves creates an exclusivism around them, keeping out more indigent shoppers and 'troublesome hangouts'. The contemporary situation in South Africa's middle class areas is about remaining constantly alert to possible attacks in malls, on the roads, and in homes. Among all of these threats, driveway hijackings have escalated phenomenally. High fencing and electronic gates are as much a menace to home owners as they may serve as a deterrent to criminals. Electronic gates take about 20 sec to open and about the same amount of time to close. Criminal calculations to hold up their victims, get into their stolen cars and ensure that the gates are reopened if they have already entered their yards, is about two minutes. Private armed patrol and police response times are between five and 15 min. Most car hijackings in South Africa are established to take place in driveways in the owners' presence because of the sophisticated electronic anti-theft devices with which they are fitted. Its resale is essentially twofold. Established syndicates within the country request hijackers for specific makes and colours of vehicles, hence their resale is usually swift and made to preordained buyers. Those that are not sold are usually driven across South Africa's borders into neighbouring countries such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana. They are often bartered for drugs, guns and ammunition, essentially for use against the generally well provisioned middle classes in South Africa.

## 19.5 Days of the Week and Time of Day in Which Hijackings Occurred

**Days of the week:**
National (Aug 2011 – Aug 2012)
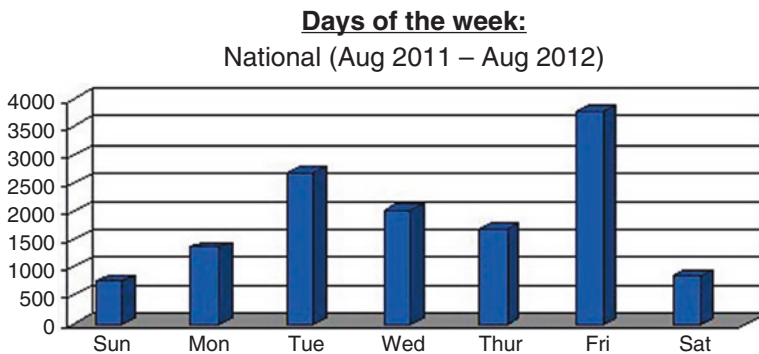
The analysis indicated that hijackings occur every day of the week, reaching a high on Fridays, due to motorists being more relaxed and traffic increasing earlier on a Friday. Weekends show a lower hijacking rate due to syndicates checking their stock and placing orders on Mondays as well as the fact that there are fewer vehicles on the road. His also explains why Tuesdays and Wednesdays show more hijackings (Source: https://www.arrivealive.co.za/Hijack-Prevention-Guidelines).

Criminals in South Africa are aware of their rights and are known to make fair use of the loopholes that the law grants them. The fivefold guidelines below indicate the options to which both homeowners and criminals are subjected, especially when guns are used:

- The attack must be unlawful.
- The attack must be imminent or have commenced.
- The attack must not have been completed. One cannot act on grounds of self-defence for an attack committed an hour earlier.
- The defensive action must be directed against the attacker.
- The defensive action must be proportionate to the circumstances. The value of property involved and the instrument used for attack are important considerations. (Source: https://www.arrivealive.co.za/Hijack-Prevention-Guidelines)

It is against these realities that a reinvented culture of keeping fit and shopping in malls has been cathartically spawned to meet the challenges faced by the middle classes in post-apartheid South Africa. Against the background of widespread unemployment, rampant corruption among state officials and a restless youth population whose expectations for improved qualities of life are dismissed by incompetent officials, (in)security within the suburban areas have become a major preoccupation. According to Statistics South Africa a total of 2.206 million crimes were committed over the period, up marginally – 0.09% – from the 2.204 million reported in 2014. Much of this statistic has to do with housebreakings and neighbourhood crimes. In its opening statement on the 2014/15 situation of crime in South Africa, Statistics South Africa stated:

> "South African households increasingly feel that the levels of violent and property crimes are increasing and this makes it unsafe to walk in parks or even allow their children to play freely in their neighbourhoods, this is according to the results of the latest Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS) released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) today... From 2011 to 2014/15, a noticeable decline was observed in the percentage of households who felt safe when it was dark. Slightly more than a third of household members felt safe walking alone in their area. As a result of fear of crime, households in South Africa took measures to protect themselves and their property. More than half of the households took physical protection measures for their homes while almost a third took physical protection measures for their vehicles. When asked about what they perceived to be the motive for perpetrators for committing property crimes, more than three-quarters of households in South Africa thought that property crimes were committed because of drug-related needs. The perception that drugs were a reason behind the high prevalence of property crime featured predominantly in Western Cape (85,7%), Eastern Cape (84,6%) and Gauteng (81,5%)."(http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=5937).
> Respondents in Westville refuted the quotation above as "too simplistic".

Among ten ad hoc respondents spoken to individually and in two groups of two and three respectively, there was acceptance that there are links to drug addiction and house breakings. But to relegate such huge numbers to a single cause such as drug addiction as the instigator in housebreakings is to ignore the complexities of criminal activities in South Africa. Opportunistic theft is rife throughout the city of Durban, and has become a norm among many who live in informal settlements (See Kironji 2008).

Their responses were challenging and provided more realistic perspectives to the range of possibilities that need to be taken into account in attempts to speculate about the reasons for crime.

- "Yes, I'm sure drug addiction has a lot to do with these attacks against homeowners. But this is also an excuse for people who don't

want to work as well…many of them who were arrested have been tested and there was no sign at all of drunkenness and or drug addiction, so how does Stats SA arrive at such generalisations?"

• "The pattern of crime increases significantly just before the Easter and December vacations. What does this tell you? Druggies don't need to steal only during these times. A number of these crooks are from the neighbouring countries. So when they hijack our cars and take them across the borders they are taking our laptops and cell phones with them. Everything in the neighbouring countries must be fetching a good price."

• "Youngsters who are struggling to find employment also find a justification in two other things. They find justification in stealing from Whites because they feel we all denied them the comforts we worked so hard for, and they find justification in the political mess that our politicians are creating in our country. Their rationale is understandable: *'If they are stealing at the top then we can steal at the bottom.'* It makes sense to them. But we, the taxpayers who are keeping the country alive, are the ones caught in the middle."

The responses above represent a significant deviation from the analysis that Statistics South Africa provided for the high incidence of housebreakings in the country. But the reasons given by citizens, as indicated above, does indicate a wider range of reasons that negates what appears to be simplistic explanations for rampant attacks against suburban residents. As educated residents of an established middle class area, respondents felt empowered enough to challenge official statistics because they did not view them as accurate reflections of the data. The first response above not only demonstrates a total rejection of the statistics, but it also had support among the other respondents. There is a tendency among South Africans not to trust officially released statistics on crime that arises out of mistrust in what the state is trying to convey as well as trying to conceal. Against the backdrop of high unemployment and mistrust towards the state that stems

from regular media reports about corruption and incompetence, the respondents painted a general picture of a quality of life under attack by a state not willing enough to, or simply incapable of, demonstrating a convincing political will to confront crime. The second and third responses provide insights that Statistics SA appeared to ignore as possible reasons for the seasonal trends and political reasons that residents impute to housebreakings. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that its representatives are vigilant enough to manage foreigners who steal for resale in their own countries, and to manage increasing levels of crime when they escalate in different times of the year. They have an equal responsibility to create employment opportunities as an elected government. And it is for the state to ensure that tax payers' money is convincingly used to protect them through surveillance and security when they justifiably feel under attack.

In their dissatisfaction against state responses to high crime in residential areas, residents in Westville, like most other middle and upper class areas in South Africa, have resorted to multiple efforts to combat crime. This constitutes a threefold effort that functions outside of the state's responsibilities in ensuring safety and security for its citizens. They are now a triple pronged approach to awareness and policing in South Africa's urban landscape: private security, community patrolling and social networking.

## 19.6 Private Security, Community Patrolling and Social Networking

The sustainability of a well provisioned middle class quality of life in an emerging democracy such as South Africa has to be at significant cost to its private citizens. In suburbs such as Westville where individually owned private spaces abound across an average of 1900 square meters per plot, houses and what lies within them have become cause for break-ins. The rising frequency with which they occur have necessitated an increase in private security, community patrolling and the increased use of social networks such as

"What's App" and "Telegram" through Android mobile phones. Money and items with a swift resale value such as laptops, televisions, cell phones, motor vehicles, jewellery and guns have replaced the conventional pattern of housebreakings when clothing and watches were targeted items. Motor vehicles are used either to escape or for resale as well.

In an observational count of a hundred homes within an arterial road and three that branch off from it, every one of them had private security boards placed at strategic places around their properties. Private security in South Africa operates on two inter-related levels: a monitored alarm system that is linked to a control room from where the first response is to telephonically communicate with the subscriber when the house alarm triggers off. If the subscriber declares his/her space to be safe, no further action is taken. If the subscriber does not answer the call or declares a possible uncertainty in their security situation, a locally stationed armed agent in a company vehicle is dispatched for an inspection of the property and a report back to the control room. Their presence has acted as an effective deterrent against the rising levels of housebreakings, although the desperation of thieves have demonstrated creative ways in which to continue to either break into households or hijack vehicles.

During 2015 and 2016 several housebreakings in Westville have resulted in homeowner murders that have instigated unprecedented community efforts in joint and collaborative action. *"Let's take back our communities",* has become a resonant clarion call in Westville, as it has throughout the country. Collaborative efforts have resulted in shared 24 h community patrols by residents, distributed on an hourly basis through a mutually agreed roster. Such patrols occur in collaboration with state provisioned police services and the private armed security services to which residents subscribe. Despite the prevalent right to patrol, action against thieves has to begin through a laddered system of notifications. In order of importance, it has to be the police first, the private security services second, and community efforts third. Community Policing in South Africa is enshrined in the constitution, in terms of Act 108, 1996. In its ideal sense:

Community Policing is a philosophy aimed at achieving more effective crime control; reduce fears of crime, improved police services through proactive partnerships and programs with communities. In short, Community Policing is a partnership between the police and the Community to solve safety problems (Community Safety and Liason 2015).

The guidelines for such forums cover an expansive set of issues in Community Policing that include: functions, forum constitutions, formal act, forum toolkits, codes of conduct, structures and regulations. Against such a plethora of guidelines lay the reality of a constant threat to the quality of life of South Africa's middle classes. There are mixed reactions to what such liaisons can produce in the fight against crime. Many continue to aver that the prevalence of crime is a reflection of the lack of political will to fight crime. Reasons behind this stems from allegations and convictions in widespread corruption among politicians and within the police services. In citing the 15-year conviction of the late Jackie Selebi, South Africa's first National Commissioner of Police to rise to the position of CEO of Interpol, and the suspension of his successor, Bheki Cele for corruption charges, Yesufu (2012) argued that crime and corruption are too interwoven to ignore in South Africa. It is against this background that citizens approach police-community partnerships with ambivalence. In Westville a respondent's words were symbolic of this cautionary approach to working with police:

"Numerous residents of our community are careful to ensure that they attend the monthly meetings with the police. We are all constantly advised that we familiarise ourselves with the legislation on CPFs so that police do not feel that they are doing us favours. In terms of the Constitution all police stations are mandated to have CPFs and all the police are accountable to the residents of the area in fighting crime. In attending the meetings regularly we are able to sus out the police and their seriousness in fighting crime in the area. When their response times are bad, when their information gathering at crime scenes are weak, letting criminals' off-the-hook, and when they behave dismissively towards victims of crime, we make sure these issues are raised…Yes, we noticed that this approach produced generally positive results."

Another respondent in an interview with a group of three felt that a major contributory factor to the pressure on police was the community's increasing use of Android mobile phones and their inbuilt facilities for social networking:

*Our use of Whats App as a social network and the Telegram as our security network is working marvellously. The community knows that when outsiders and unknown people are walking or driving through our area it must be reported on the Whats App social network. When there are really suspicious activities in the area or robberies, it must be put on Telegram. …An interjection by another: Our homes and valuables inside them are our lives sweat and hard labour. People shouldn't think they can just come in here and take them away from us. They wanted a Black government now they have it. We can't change that. But it is for the government to provide jobs for them…A third interjection: But many of them don't want to work. They have made stealing and killing their life's work. Why go out and work when you can easily rob someone and live off their hard work for free…There is a logic to the widespread pandemonium of theft and rape and killing in this country. If politicians of the highest calibre are so corrupt why should the struggling unemployed masses work so hard?*

The two responses above provide significant insights into contemporary perceptions about several realities in post-apartheid South Africa. In the first of the two, caution was taken to talk in legalistic and perceptive terms about provision of services by the local state in terms of safety and security. The respondent's emphasis on people knowing their rights was a form of community empowerment. Awareness of their constitutional rights empowered residents against possible manipulation by officers who are inclined towards corrupt practices. In CPF meetings residents attend armed with facts in order to make the police service functional to community needs. Their inclinations are not to be unnecessarily confrontational, but to be cooperative and combative against a menace that they find overwhelmingly consuming in their will to live quiet peaceful lives. In Westville, there is a will among both police and residents to work together to protect the quality of life for which the area had become so renowned. White, Indian and to a lesser extent African residents have transcended the barriers of race to find common ground in confronting crime in their area. Their collaboration with African officers is no stumbling block to the creation of congenial discussion forums through the CPFs. As the liaisons with the South African Police Services continue, trust and mutual interests in the preservation of the quality of life in Westville consolidates. But a note of caution was also made not to lose sight of the fact that the Police Services have a seriously dented public image both within and outside the country. His purpose was to emphasise transparency by the police in the handling of their criminal cases in the area. While the working relationship has been a cordial one within the CPF, there remains a prevalent need to be vigilant on the police as well. Yusufu's (2012) reference to the two national Police Commissioners conviction and suspension, respectively, provides an indication of how the outside world must be viewing the state of policing in South Africa. Recent research by Rademeyer and Wilkinson (2013) provides convincing support for Yusufu's statements:

The South African Police Service recently admitted that hundreds of serving police officers are convicted criminals. The figures are shocking but they fail to reveal the full extent of criminality in the police….The South African Police Service (SAPS) revealed recently that 1,448 serving police officers are convicted criminals, among them a major-general, ten brigadiers, 21 colonels, ten majors, 43 lieutenant-colonels, 163 captains, 84 lieutenants and 716 warrant officers. And it has hesitantly promised to rid the police of these "unwanted elements" by June 2014.

The second statement recorded in the group interview was a radical diversion from the first. Their responses were somewhat uninhibited and took for granted that I endorsed the racialized insinuations in which they spoke. Their references to the use of social networking devises through their mobile phones were imbued with a pompousness that implied a sense of victory over their crime watch exercises. But they also spoke in tones of a crudeness inherent in the speeches of racially divisive conversations. None of the respondents were Black/African, and their responses were insidiously critical of the transformational initiatives in post-apartheid South Africa. Their references to a "Black government"

and "providing jobs for them", bore the characterisation of a racial dualism of "us and them". Yet one of the three was a person of Indian origin, and two were Whites – both from racial categories that were once divided and privileged through apartheid. There are at least two issues in which their statements are entrenched. The first is that all three saw themselves as belonging to middle class backgrounds before considering their racial classifications. They were known to be in reasonably frequent contact with the Black/African residents within their precincts. In such communication, especially through the social network groups, they generally avoided crude racialized overtones. In the second issue their comments lay bare in their determination to defend the congeniality that their middle class statuses bring to their suburb. One of the three respondents in the group succinctly summed it up:

> "We studied and worked hard to go beyond what our hard working parents sweated and slogged for. They provided for us in ways that made us realise that we needed to take ourselves higher than the standard they gave to us. We have done that, and we are working hard enough to take our children even higher…The Black youth in this country have to realise that the state is the perpetrator here, not the residents of places like Westville. Instead of stealing so much from public coffers they should be using the taxpayers' money to provide long term employment and proper social services for them. Otherwise we are not going to win this war."

It is self-evident what respondents and the broader population of Westville are fighting for. Their aim is to maintain and sustain a quality of life that is visibly distinguishable from the surrounding working class townships and squatter camps. These are high density living spaces with very little room for privacy and appeal to someone wanting to provide their growing children with an environment to thrive and improve their qualities of life. It is a feature that is amply available in an area such as Westville, occupied by mainly highly educated, high earning Whites and Indians, and to a lesser extent by Coloureds (people of mixed descent) and Africans. The operative word in this statement is "black youth". It is normative for contributors to the respective social network groups to alert the neighbourhood of

unknown people either walking or driving through the area, especially if they are Black/African. Reference to them is usually through the acronym: "BM". Dependent upon the number that may be doing so, they would generally read for instance as: *"2 BM walking down the road and taking note of each house"*. Residents then begin tracking their movements, depending upon their availability at their homes. Some may, when possible, attempt to photograph them for identification. Their justification for such acronyms stems from the fact that every housebreaking and car-jacking in the area over the last 3 years was done by Black youth, giving rise to phobic and racialized perceptions of most Black males that walk through the residential areas. Exceptions are made with familiar and known people who work for and in some instances who live on properties of noted residents in the area.

## 19.7 Conclusion

In quality of life studies that have to do with material conditions amongst the working, middle and upper classes in heterogeneous societies, it is more than educational levels and incomes that have to be brought to focus. Crucial issues would include race, ethnicity, religion, caste and spoken languages. Political decision making is theoretically about deployment of resources for the upliftment of communities, but often with subtle biases towards specific groups. In South Africa since the eighteenth century, it was colonialism and apartheid that functioned to the detriment of the majority of the population, which reciprocally functioned to the detriment of national economic performances because of the costs of having to pay for maintaining White privileges and quadrupling of services in each province based on racial and ethnic criteria. The quadruplicating of social services for all four classified groups during apartheid, further disaggregated to ethnic groups in each region, and exacerbated the costs of implementing apartheid. But the situation has not transformed in the post-apartheid era either. While the demise of apartheid has led to singular Ministries for the deliverance of social

services throughout the country, only devolved to provincial levels for easier and less costly management, another endemic menace has overwhelmed the state i.e. the triple jeopardy of corruption, incompetence and mismanagement. Its effects are visibly noticed in the innumerable squatter camps that have consolidated in both the peripheries and amidst suburban landscapes since 1994. And its impacts are being felt by the middle classes and the siege mentalities with which they now live. Not being able to hike, jog or socialise in public spaces within the precincts of their own neighbourhoods after sunset, constitutes a profound statement against the prevalent fears with which people in middle class areas now live. Safety and security issues has given rise to a plethora of creative ideas in business with home owners, but at significant cost to them as well. South Africans now spend up to 10% of their after tax earnings on security of their homes, motor vehicles and businesses. They have concomitantly adjusted their times of exercising and socialisation patterns to meet the challenges of unexpected attacks by home intruders and hijackers of motor vehicles. In everything that they presently do, safety against attackers remains the foremost priority in their planning. It is the price they have to pay in maintaining their middle and upper class statuses in South Africa. Collectively, they illustrate the subjectivity in their qualities of life through their compromised sense of satisfaction, contentment and happiness.

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# Disability, Life Satisfaction and Participation in Sports

# 20

Ricardo Pagan

## Abstract

Despite the positive externalities associated with the participation in sports that individuals can obtain, there is a lack of studies analysing the impact of this participation on life satisfaction of people without disabilities in general, and of people with disabilities in particular. In this study, we analyse the effects of taking part in active sports and its intensity (i.e., never, seldom, monthly, and daily/weekly) on life satisfaction. Particularly, we are interested in testing two different hypotheses: (a) participation in sports increases individuals' life satisfaction, and (b) the effects of this participation on life satisfaction are different for people without and with disabilities, being greater for this latter group. One of the main advantages of this study is that we have used longitudinal data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (for the period 1984–2011) for a large sample of individuals (with disabilities or not) aged 16 or over. To estimate the life satisfaction equation we have run the model proposed by Van Praag et al. (J Econ Behav Org 51:29–49, 2003) called "*Probit Adapted OLS (POLS)*", which allows us to identify the factors affecting life satisfaction reported by people without

and with disabilities, taking into account unobserved heterogeneity, and using simple OLS-techniques without any loss of information. Although people with disabilities are less likely to take part in active sports than their counterparts, the results show that they obtain higher levels of life satisfaction than non-disabled people from their participation in sports, especially when this participation is more intense. For example, the life satisfaction premium obtained by individuals with disabilities from their participation in sports "*daily/ weekly*" is almost double that reported by people without disabilities as compared to the reference person. This premium could be explained by the greater difficulties and constraints that people with disabilities face when they demand for sport activities. Policy makers and the sport industry must promote and facilitate full access and participation of people with disabilities in sports by eliminating all barriers, understanding their differential needs and providing an inclusive leisure environment.

## 20.1 Introduction

Sports and physical activity at all levels of the population are considered as a major policy goal (Ruseski et al. 2014). Regular physical activity

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contributes to reducing stress, depression, hypertension, osteoporosis and obesity, and increasing emotional well-being, energy level, self-esteem, and social relations (e.g., Bouchard et al. 1994; Gauvin and Spence 1996; Sherwood and Jeffery 2000; and Dimeo et al. 2001). In contrast and according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the lack of physical activity is the fourth-leading risk factor for all global deaths. Across Europe, inactivity's contribution to all-cause mortality amounts to over 500,000 deaths per year, and imposes economic costs of €80.4 billion per year to the EU-28 through four major non-communicable diseases: coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, colorectal and breast cancer (International Sport and Culture Association 2015). Within this context, this latter association also mentions that those people with lower-income demographics (e.g., older people, immigrants, women, and people with disabilities) are less likely to undertake physical activity, and hence suffering from greater negative health consequences of inactivity as compared to their counterparts from more affluent segments of society. For example, people with serious and persistent mental illness have substantially higher rates than does the general population for physical health comorbidities related to inactivity, such as hypertension and diabetes (Dixon et al. 1999; National Center for Health Statistics 2015). Furthermore, in general people with disabilities are more likely to report lower life satisfaction scores than people without disabilities (Lucas 2007; Oswald and Powdthavee 2008; Pagan 2010 and 2012). Sport participation can be seen as a reasonable and low-cost way to improve their levels of life satisfaction and social integration (Santiago and Coyle 2004). However, Rimmer et al. (2008) point out that in many cases the possibilities of people with disabilities to practice physical exercise are quite limited due to the existence of personal (e.g., lack of motivation and energy) and environmental or facilities barriers (e.g., inaccessible programs, equipment, appropriate staff, and services offered in community recreation facilities).

This study analyses the impact of the participation in sports on the levels of life satisfaction reported by people without and with disabilities in Germany. Particularly, we are interested in testing the following two hypotheses: (a) participation in sports increases individuals' life satisfaction, and (b) people with disabilities obtain higher levels of life satisfaction from their participation in sports as compared to those observed for their non-disabled counterparts. For this purpose, Lloyd and Auld (2002) mention that both the frequency and nature of leisure participation (in our case, sport participation) are seen as attributes that could be determinants of life satisfaction. As for the first hypothesis, we assume that many leisure activities, including sport participation, are salutary and may serve as "*breathers*" that provide a chance to take a break, engage in a pleasurable diversionary activity, and consequently induce positive emotions and feelings which contribute to increasing individuals' life satisfaction (Lazarus et al. 1980; Iwasaki and Mannell 2000; Pressman et al. 2009). For example, Biddle et al. (2004) find the positive effects of physical activity on physical and physiological health (e.g., cardiovascular disease, overweight and obesity, type II diabetes, and skeletal health) in young people. These positive effects of sport participation on health lead to enhance individuals' life satisfaction (Downward and Rasciute 2011; Ruseski et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2016). However, the participation in sports can be more important and vital for some people who suffer from lower health conditions, discrimination, stigmatization, social exclusion, and inferior life options, such as, for example, people with disabilities (Lloyd et al. 2001), who are less likely to have access to health, rehabilitation, social support, income programmes, education, leisure and employment (Pagan 2015). In this sense, the major psychological benefits of successful physical activity experiences within the disabled population are enhancing self-perceptions ranging from global self-esteem to more discrete and specific competence and self-efficacy judgments (Martin 2013). Furthermore, sport participation

may provide people with disabilities with stronger social relations and relaxation (especially during times of stress and in the post-stress recovery period and rehabilitation processes) that lead to enhancing their happiness. Consequently, we expect that the contribution of sport participation on life satisfaction is even greater for people with disabilities as compared to that estimated for people without disabilities.

To test these two hypotheses, we use data taken from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) for the period 1984–2011, and estimate a model proposed by Van Praag et al. (2003) called "*Probit Adapted OLS (POLS)*", which allows us to take into account unobserved heterogeneity and use simple OLS-techniques without any loss of information. We also use a measure of disability based on the work of Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007), which combines two variables included in the GSOEP "*health satisfaction*" and "*degree of officially registered disability*". Traditionally, the two most frequently mentioned models of disability throughout the last few years have been the social and the medical ones. The latter has focused on people's impairments, viewing people with disabilities through the prism of physical or mental dysfunctions, which both devalue and stigmatise the individual (Zajadacz 2014). In contrast, in the social model, disability is not an attribute of an individual, but rather a complex collection of conditions, many of which are induced by the social environment. The social model views disability as having a social dimension and regards impairment as part of human diversity (Buhalis and Darcy 2011). Its strength lies in the focus on societal change and not on the individual adapting to the disabling environment. It also implies that the removal of disabling barriers serves to improve the lives of people with disabilities and, consequently, their health status, giving them the same opportunities as others. However, in this study our measure of disability is closer to the medical model than the social model due mainly to the lack of additional information in the GSOEP for people with disabilities.

This study contributes to reducing the gap in the existing literature on sport participation and life satisfaction for people with disabilities. First, to our knowledge this empirical study is the first one that examines and compares the impact of taking part in sports on life satisfaction levels reported by people with and without disabilities, by using panel data techniques. Therefore, this study represents a step forward in the research agenda on disability and sport participation. Second, a novel aspect of the current study with respect to previous empirical works is that we use a longitudinal dataset (GSOEP), which covers a very large period of time (from 1984 to 2011), allowing us to control for unobserved individual effects that may capture individual personality traits. The use of data for the German case is also interesting because German sport industry is very developed and one of its world powers (Pan 2011). For example, in 2010 more than half of the population (55.5%) ctively participated in sports, being two thirds (64.2%) of the population under 16 years (Preuss et al. 2012). As a result, the total sport-related consumption amounts to €138.6 billion, divided into consumption resulting from "*active sport participation*" (€112.6 billion) and from "*interest in sport*" (€112.6 billion). In addition, we employ an estimation technique (POLS) that is easier and faster to implement, more flexible for more advanced models, and can, without any drawbacks, be applied within a fixed effects environment. Third, our results can contribute to designing and implementing specific public policies aimed at promotion of the positive effects of physical activity and sports on life satisfaction among people with disabilities, which allow an increase in their standard of living in general and in their integration into the labour market in particular, as the European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 proclaims.

The remainder of the chapter is as follows. In "*Review of literature*", we present a review of recent literature concerning life satisfaction, disability and participation in sports. The "*Data and method*" section describes the database, main variables included in our analysis and the econometric strategy used. In the "*Results*" section, we present and discuss our descriptive and econometric results in order to test the validity of

our two hypotheses. The last section "*Conclusion*" summarizes the main results and presents some implications from a public policy perspective.

## 20.2    Review of Literature

Looking at the most recent literature on life satisfaction and sports, we find works for a set of countries or region (Wang and Wong (2014) for 33 countries, and Pawlowski et al. (2011) for 19 European countries), as well as for a specific country, such as, Germany (Becchetti et al. 2008 and 2012; Lechner 2009; Ruseski et al. 2014; and Schmiedeberg and Schroder 2016), United Kingdom (Rasciute and Downward 2010; Downward and Rasciute 2011), the United States (Huang and Humphreys 2012; Kim et al. 2016), Spain (Goñi and Infante 2010), and Iran (Gatab and Pirhayti 2012). Wang and Wong (2014) use data from the International Social Survey Program for 33 countries (a sample of approximately 48,000 respondents) to study the statistical link between leisure and happiness. They include as a regressor the variable "*go to gym (sports)*" in their life satisfaction regression model, and do not find a substantive effect of sports on happiness. Pawlowski et al. (2011) investigate whether the effect of sport participation on subjective well-being is age-specific for 19 European counties. They use data taken from the International Social Survey Programme for the year 2007, and find that age-specific differences concerning the (marginal) impact of physical activity on subjective well-being exist. They conclude that being generally physically active contributes the more to subjective well-being the older the individuals are. They mention that an important limitation of their study is the use of cross-sectional data, and the basic so-called age effect on physical activity, which can be seen as a proxy for the physical, mental, social and economic characteristics of a certain age group, cannot be obtained by cross-sectional analysis. Consequently, panel data should be necessary to analyse these questions.

For Germany, Becchetti et al. (2008) investigate the impact of re1ational goods on individual life satisfaction, and include a set of social activities from volunteering to spending time with friends, attending social gatherings and participation in sports, among others. They use data from the GSOEP from 1984 to 2004 for a large sample of individuals. They find that participation in sports generates significant effects on life satisfaction. In Becchetti et al. (2012), they instrument, using again the GSOEP (period 1984–2007), social leisure with various measures of the age cohort specific probability of retirement, and once again obtain that social leisure has a positive and significant effect on life satisfaction. To obtain this result, they create a "*Relating Time Index (RTI)*", which aggregates the information gathered in five questions asking to people how much time they devote to "attend social gatherings, attend cultural events, perform volunteer work, attend church or religious events, and participate in sports". Lechner (2009) analyses the effects of individual leisure sport participation on long-term labour market variables, health and subjective well-being indicators for West Germany, and based on individual data from GSOEP (1984–2006). For males, he finds that there is also some indication that satisfaction with life in general is significantly increased in the long run by sport participation. For females, the effect of sport participation goes in the same direction (with the exception of the last period), but appears to be too small and too noisy to become significant. He also found that active sports increase individuals' health status and earnings (by about 1200 EUR p.a. over a 16 year period compared to no or very low sports activities). In addition, Ruseski et al. (2014) try to establish causal evidence of a relationship between sport participation and self-reported happiness using instrumental variables, and using data from a 2009 population survey living in Rheinberg (Germany). They find that individuals who participate in sport have higher life happiness. Their results also suggest a U-shaped relationship between age and self-reported happiness. Finally, Schmiedeberg and Schroder (2016) analyse the association between leisure activities and life satisfaction, based on longitudinal data from Germany (three waves of the German Family

Panel collected in 2008/2009, 2010/2011, and 2012/2013). After applying fixedeffects regression models, they found significant and positive effects of sport participation on life satisfaction. However, the results did not show a clear pattern of increasing life satisfaction with increasing frequency of doing sport, and only two of the categories (less than once per month and daily) showed significant differences to the reference category (never). But it seems to matter whether an individual does sport at all or not.

Using cross-sectional data from the "*Taking Part Survey (2005)*" for United Kingdom, Rasciute and Downward (2010) estimate econometric models, controlling for a large set of covariates, to investigate the impact of physical activities such as sport participation and active forms of transport on happiness and health. They find evidence that physical activity and active travel have a broadly positive effect on individuals' well-being and health, as well as to society through externalities. They also mention the need to further investigation about sport participation and possible public policies to boost well-being and health within the society. Once again, Downward and Rasciute (2011) use the "*Taking Part Survey (2005)*" to examine the effects of sport participation on subjective well-being, defined as an ordinal variable measuring happiness. They estimate an ordered probit model and find that sport participation has a positive association with the subjective wellbeing of the population, as measured by happiness and, moreover, estimates its monetary value. They estimate that in the aggregate, on average, a person values participation in sport to be £19,000–23,000 per year, while an additional sport participated in relative to their portfolio is valued at about £1600–3500 per year. Furthermore, these authors point out that there is also the suggestion that the value of sport can vary over time and that its value through multi-sport participation may be complex.

Huang and Humphreys (2012) use microdata from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System between 2005 and 2009 and County Business Patterns, and study the relationship between participation in physical activity and self-reported happiness in the United States.

They run a two-stage instrumental variables approach and find that otherwise-similar individuals are more likely to participate in physical activity if living in a county that has greater access to fitness and sports establishments; those individuals also report higher life satisfaction. Both males and females gain happiness from participating in physical activity, and males appear to benefit more. Kim et al. (2016) investigate, using data released from the Health and Retirement Study in 2008 for the United States, the relationship between leisure-time physical activity and psychological benefits such as positive affect, optimism, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction among elderly immigrants. They find a positive influence of leisure-time physical activity on well-being for American immigrants at older ages.

Finally, Goñi and Infante (2010), using a sample of 408 Spanish adults, find positive associations between physical-sporting activity and both physical self-concept and satisfaction with life. That is, the more physical-sporting activity engaged in, the better the subject's self-concept and the greater their satisfaction with life. Gatab and Pirhayti (2012) investigate the effect of the selected exercise on male students' general health and happiness in Payame Noor University in Babol. Using a sample of 80 male students and divided into two groups (experimental and control groups), they found that after 8 weeks of exercise, there was a significant improvement of happiness, physical symptoms, depression and impaired social functioning and general health indexes. In the control group, no significant changes were observed in the desired characteristic.

As for the previous empirical evidence on the relationship between disability, participation in sports and life satisfaction, there is a surprising lack of studies, with the exception of the works of Lee and Park (2010), Yazicioglu et al. (2012), Phillips et al. (2013), and Pagan (2015). First, Lee and Park (2010) examine the effects of physical activity or sport participation on life satisfaction for people with disabilities in Korea. They use cross-sectional information on a small sample of individuals and from a larger research project funded by the Korean Sports Association for

the Disabled. Using ordered probit and logit model, they find that the non-health effects of physical activity or sport participation on life satisfaction are positive and statistically significant from all estimations of different specifications and estimation methods. They conclude that their results must be analysed with caution because their sample lacks some information and may be biased (e.g., household income data are missing, and monthly incomes need to be collected as a continuous variable). Therefore, they suggest further studies with well-balanced and longitudinal data. Second, Yazicioglu et al. (2012) compare the quality of life and life satisfaction scores between people with physical disabilities who participated in adapted sports and those who did not participate in any adapted sports. They carry out a cross-sectional controlled study consisted of 60 individuals with physical disabilities (paraplegia and amputee). They found that people with physical disabilities who participated in adapted sports had significantly higher quality of life and life satisfaction scores compared to people with physical disabilities not involved in any adapted sports. Recently, Phillips et al. (2013) examine the mediating roles played by self-efficacy and health status in the physical activity and quality of life relationship from baseline to 18 month follow-up in a small sample of communitydwelling older adults in 2007. Their results show that increases in physical activity are associated with increases in exercise self-efficacy which, in turn, was associated with higher physical self-worth and fewer disability limitations which were associated with greater life satisfaction. They stress that it is important to get a better understanding of the role physical activity plays in life satisfaction is crucial, as it may well be a more salient reason for older adults to participate in physical activity and could have a significant impact on public health. Pagan (2015) analyses the effect of participating in leisure activities (e.g., social gatherings, cultural events, active sports, volunteer work, etc.) on the levels of life satisfaction reported by people with and without disabilities. He uses data taken from five waves of the GSOEP corresponding to the years 1990, 1995, 1998, 2003 and 2008, and employs a continuous vari-

able measuring the individual's sport participation. From a descriptive perspective, he finds that the participation of people with disabilities in sports is still very low as compared to that for their non-disabled counterparts. The econometric results show that the participation in sports increases the levels of life satisfaction reported by people with disabilities.

Although within the field of psychology and sociology there is abundant literature analysing the subjective well-being of individuals (e.g., see Diener 1984, Diener et al. 1999, and Sirgy 2001, 2002 for reviews), only a few studies have analysed the levels of life satisfaction reported by people with disabilities. For example, Freedman et al. (2012) investigates the link between disability and subjective wellbeing among older couples, using data from the 2009 Disability and Use of Time supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics in the United States. They find that older married adults with disabilities report worse subjective wellbeing than those without, and neither different demographic and socioeconomic profiles nor differences in participation fully account for these disparities. Lucas-Carrasco and Salvador-Carulla (2012) analyse life satisfaction among Spanish people with intellectual disabilities (sample size = 99 individuals), and find that those living in residential institutions are less satisfied when compared with persons living in communities or living at borne, and that health, relationships, borne environment and work are relevant in determining life satisfaction. There are very few longitudinal studies that have addressed the relationship between disability and life satisfaction in general (e.g., Lucas 2007; Oswald and Powdthavee 2008; Pagan 2010), and disability and different domains of satisfaction in particular (Powdthavee 2009; Pagan 2012). For example, the results obtained in the works of Lucas (2007), Oswald and Powdthavee (2008) and Pagan (2010) on the effects of the onset of disability on life satisfaction are contradictory. Lucas (2007) does not find adaptation at all to disability in terms of life satisfaction for British and German individuals, whereas Oswald and Powdthavee (2008) only find a partial adaptation to disability (around 30–50% according to the

grade of severity of disability) for the same European countries. In contrast, Pagan (2010) obtains a full adaptation to disability after 6 years from the onset for German males. Powdthavee (2009) has also analysed the effects of disability on life satisfaction and seven domains of satisfaction (health, income, housing, partner's satisfaction, social life, and amount of leisure time and use of leisure time) for British individuals. His results show full adaptation to disability in almost all of the affected life domains, but it is often incomplete for the severely disabled. In the same line, Pagan (2012) analyses the effect of the onset of disability on life satisfaction and five different domains of satisfaction (health, household income, housing, job, leisure) for German individuals. He finds that although individual obtain complete adaptation to disability in terms of global life satisfaction (5 years after the onset), this adaptation is not complete in all domains of satisfaction. For example, despite the fact that the levels of health satisfaction drop as the individual becomes disabled, after the onset it increases but the levels are lower than those reached before the onset. In contrast, the adaptation is especially faster in the terms of leisure satisfaction (3 years after the onset), household income and housing satisfaction (5 years after the onset in both cases). Recently, Addabbo et al. (2016) brings evidence on the predictors of life satisfaction of people with disabilities in Italy, focusing on four specific dimensions (relations with relatives and friends, economic conditions, and leisure time). They find that health status is confirmed to be a relevant predictor of life satisfaction especially as far as the satisfaction with economic conditions and leisure time are concerned. More specifically, being severely limited in daily activities negatively affects the satisfaction with leisure time and with interaction with friends.

## 20.3 Data and Method

### 20.3.1 Sample

To carry out this study we have used longitudinal data drawn from the German Socio Economic Panel (GSOEP) for the period 1984–2011, which allow us to have information on a plethora of socioeconomic variables at an individual and household level (e.g., living conditions, household composition, employment status, income, health, time use, and satisfaction measures). The GSOEP started in 1984 with a sample of 5921 households and 12,245 individual respondents. This dataset is periodically refreshed with new samples (in 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2011) in order to obtain successive waves that are representative of the total population of Germany. In 2011, the GSOEP contained data from approximately 12,100 households and 22,000 adult respondents (for more information on the GSOEP data, see, e.g., Wagner et al. 2007). The main reasons for using this dataset are, first, the longitudinal nature of the GSOEP allows us to control for unobserved heterogeneity, thus determining cause and effect between the key variables (life satisfaction and participation in sports); second, the high degree of stability of the sample over time; and third, the existence of a large number of observations at an individual level, making it possible to investigate the impact of the participation in sports on life satisfaction for people without and with disabilities.

Looking at the GSOEP questionnaire, we find that includes questions regarding free time (e.g., going to cultural events, meeting with friends and relative, artistic or musical activities, volunteer work, attending religious events, and participation in sports). In addition, the GSOEP also contains information on the levels of satisfaction with life reported by individuals. Although we use data covering the period 1984–2011, there are some years for which we do not have information on the variable "*participation in sports*" due to the fact that they are not recorded on a yearly basis. As a result, the years for which we actually have observations for all variables of interest are 1984–1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994–1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011 (i.e., 19 waves). In our case, we restrict our sample to those individuals who are aged 16 or over. After taking into account the missing information on the relevant variables, the final samples used in the estimation process are 196,433

and 21,235 person-year observations for the non-disabled and disabled samples, respectively (which are 39,083 and 7866 individuals, each observed, on average, for 5 and 2.7 different years, respectively).

## 20.3.2 Measures

Veenhoven (1995) defines life satisfaction as the degree to which one judges the quality of one's life favourably. Traditionally, most psychologists consider that the best way to study life satisfaction and/or other domains of satisfaction is by asking individuals how they feel. In our case, to measure individuals' life satisfaction, we have used the participant responses to the following question included in the GSOEP: "*How satisfied are you with life, all things considered?*". The possible responses to this satisfaction question range from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). This question is available in all waves and has been previously used, for example, by Lucas (2007), Oswald and Powdthavee (2008), and Pagan (2012). Veenhoven (1995) points out that this single-item measure is generally as reliable and valid as multi-item measures. Furthermore, psychologists have usually considered these answers to satisfaction questions as cardinal (Ng 1997; Schwartz 1995), whereas some economists have assumed the ordinality of the answers (Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Frijters 2004; Van Praag 1991). Nevertheless, Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Frijters (2004) conclude that assuming cardinality or ordinality has little impact on estimation results. In our case, we will assume cardinality because the econometric results are rather similar and their interpretation is simpler.

As for the key variable "*disability*", this has been calculated for each year (period 1984–2011) and using a work limitation-based measure of disability purposed by Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007), which is comparable with the work limitation question included in the Current Population Survey for the USA. These authors pointed out that the working-age population with disabilities in social sciences-based nationally representative

datasets has been usually determined by the response to a single work limitation question. Looking at the GSOEP questionnaire, Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007) found that the work-limitation question included in the GSOEP has been changed over time and it had not been asked in all its waves (from 1988 to 1991 and in 1993 and 1994, or at all from 2002 onwards). To bridge these gaps in the data they combine two other health-related GSOEP questions available in all waves of the GSOEP data to consistently construct alternative work limitation measures, and test their performance by comparing them to actual reported work limitation in the years these data are available. In addition, Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007) provide an example of the power of such a measure. They use the GSOEP 100 percent sample for the years 1984–2002 (in our case, we use the English Public Use Version of the GSOEP (95% of the full sample, due to confidentiality reasons) provided by Cornell University (Department of Policy Analysis and Management). To construct the measure of work limitation-based disability, Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007) use two variables:

(a) Since individual self-reported work limitations are likely to be related to their perceptions of their health, and since health satisfaction is a completely subjective measure that is likely to be highly correlated with a self-perceived work limitation, health satisfaction is one part of the measure of work limitation-based disability. This first part of this combination definition is obtained from the current health satisfaction question ("*How satisfied are you with your health?*"), which ranges from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied), and is highly correlated with the self-perceived work limitation.

(b) Another question in the GSOEP that is directly related to work limitations and disability is: "*Are you officially registered as having a reduced capacity to work or as being severely disabled? If yes, what is the degree of your disability?*". The German Institute for Economic Research (DIW

Berlin) provides an algorithm to impute the missing values of this variable in the years 1986, 1990 and 1993 (for further information, see: http://www.diw.de/english). Individuals register their disability with the German Pension Office, which also assigns a degree of disability, ranging from 1 to 100 percent. They mention that this registration-based disability question directly captures part of the population with disabilities.

From these two variables that are highly correlated with a severe limitation, Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007) offer two possible ways to construct a consistent measure of disability in all years. The first is to predict what they regard as the true disability status with an estimation of limited dependent variables, using the health satisfaction and the degree of disability as explanatory variables (*logit indicator*). The second is to find combinations of different levels of health satisfaction and degrees of disability, and see how these match with the true measure of limitation (*combination indicator*). They mention that while the estimation method may be preferred because it leads to a better use of the information and preserves the marginal distributions, it also leads to the problem of imprecise predictions if the standard errors are large. Although the single measure of combinations of health satisfaction and degrees of disability does not make maximum use of the data, it does not suffer from prediction biases as such and is somewhat easier to compute. They conclude and demonstrate that the best concordance of a combination definition with the severe limitation is a "*combination of individuals with a health satisfaction level of at most 2 or a degree of disability of at least 53 percent*". They point out that the estimation approach takes the given information into account better than the combination measure. However, the combination measure is easier to compute and, more importantly, is not subject to the choice of an estimation procedure or the imprecision of prediction. Even if the estimation measure yields better results and can be regarded as the upper limit in the efficient use of information available, they are still interested in how well the non-estimated measure will do in

comparison. They find that both measures consistently place more than 90 percent of the sample in the correct category and follow the trends of the true measure well (see, for example, Table 4 included in Burkhauser and Schroeder 2007). After run different regressions, they conclude that the analyses performed suggest that both indicators perform reasonable close to the true measure of severe limitation and are almost indistinguishable from one another. While the logit indicator performs slightly better in the initial evaluation of association, the combination approach was more successful in replicating the regression results based on the true measure. As for the prevalence and trends in disability, Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007) provide a set of figures and tables that show the consistency of these disability measures (logit *versus* combination indicator). They also demonstrate the consistency and validity of the combination measure to investigate the impact of different disability policies and policy changes in Germany alone or in comparison with the United States. Therefore, in our case we have used the combination indicator to identify the disabled population in our sample, that is, individuals with a health satisfaction level of at most 2 or a degree of disability of at least 53% are considered disabled. Finally and according to Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007), if we use only the degree of disability measure to identify the disabled population, we would miss individuals with a work limitation who were in the process of becoming registered and who had short-term limitations or had decided it was not worth registering.

Looking the GSOEP questionnaire, we observe that the information on participation in sports has differed over the year. In 1984, we observe that the question to know whether individuals do sports in their free time was: "*How often do you engage in the following activities in your free time? Active sports: never/rarely; occasionally; often/regularly*". In 1985 and onwards, we can find two types of questions. The first of the questions was: "*Which of the following activities do you do in your free time? Please enter how often you practice each activity.... Active sports participation: every week; every month; less frequently; never*". This question was posed

in 1985, 1986, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2011. The second type used in 1990, 1995, 1998, 2003, and 2008, was "*How frequently do you do the following activities?... do sports: daily; once per week; once per month; less than once a month; never*". According to Lechner (2009) and although the wording is not exactly the same once the extreme categories (daily, once a week as well as never, less than monthly) of the second type of the questions are aggregated, both types of questions appear to be sufficiently similar to be used in combination. In our case, we follow the works of Becchetti et al. (2012) and Pagan (2016) to reclassify homogeneously the frequencies of participating in sports, and with the main purpose of preserving the ordinal scale of each answer obtained from this question. In this sense, we have created a categorical variable called "*Participation in sports*" with four categories: (a) never, (b) seldom, (e) monthly, and (d) daily/weekly. Because of the low number of individuals with disabilities in the first response "*daily*", we have combined the first two responses into one, i.e., "*daily/weekly*".

### 20.3.3 Method

To estimate the determinants of life satisfaction (LS) for people without and with disabilities, in particular the effects of participation in sports on it, we follow the theoretical framework developed by Clark and Oswald (1996), which is based on the definition of the individual's utility. The estimation of this utility function has been habitually carried out using satisfaction (in our case LS) as a proxy, through the utilisation of different models. In our case, we use the "*Probit Adapted OLS (POLS)*" model with fixed-effects and proposed by Van Praag et al. (2003), which represents an alternative approach to traditional ordered response models and is based on the transformation of the data that allow discrete-choice variables as if they are distributed along the whole real line. One advantage of this method compared to ordered probit (OP) is that when estimating panel data, the fixed effect error struc-

ture is much more easily implemented than with a similar model in the OP framework (and also substantially reduces computational time). In addition, POLS estimates (both coefficients and standard errors) are similar to OP estimates (except for a multiplicative factor) and it is especially useful in the presence of ordinal variables among regressors (see Terza 1987; Van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell 2008). In addition, this method is very helpful when we employ Probit-type variables in longitudinal analysis (as in our case) with intertemporal correlations. The drawback is that a harsher normality assumption is needed. The reason why these authors prefer POLS to OP is that they can use simple OLS techniques without any loss of information (the resulting trade-off ratios are virtually identical, as are t ratios). Not only are the OLS variants computationally easier than the discrete methods that require the computation of many integrals and/or Monte Carlo simulations, but they also open the way to the application of linear classical methods to discrete response data.

As note earlier, our dependent variable LS is categorical, naturally ordered and with $i$ response categories (in our case, $i$ is from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). To use POLS it is necessary to transform the LS variable into their conditional expectations and based on the properties of the normal distribution (Maddala 1983). For example, we define:

$$\text{LS} = \text{E}\left(\text{LS}|\mu_{i-1} < \text{LS} \le \mu_i\right)$$
$$= \left(\text{n}\left(\mu_{i-1}\right) - \text{n}\left(\mu_i\right)\right) / \left(\text{N}\left(\mu_i\right) - \text{N}\left(\mu_{i-1}\right)\right) \quad (20.1)$$

where N is the normal distribution function, n is the normal density function and $\mu_i$ are the values for which it holds that $N(\mu_i) - N(\mu_{i-1})$ is the fraction of respondents belonging to response category $i$ for LS. Furthermore and as noted earlier, using this transformation ensures that the dependent variable now varies over the whole real axis. Apart from a set of dummy variables measuring the "*participation in sports*" (i.e., daily/weekly, monthly, seldom and never), we include in the LS regression those traditionally used in the existing literature (e.g., Clark and Oswald 1996; Clark et al. 1996; Zimmermann

and Easterlin 2006; Oswald and Powdthavee 2008; Clark et al. 2008; Pagan 2012). We include individuals' characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, years of education, employment status and if the individual is a home owner. At a household level, we also include the number of children (under age 18) in the household, total number of persons living in the household and the real household income per capita (in logarithms). Finally, we take into account the region of residence and the year of the interview. To obtain all estimation results we have used the statistical package STATA 14.

According to Huang and Humphreys (2012) and Ruseski et al. (2014), sport participation may be an endogenous regressor in an equation with life satisfaction as the dependent variable due to unobservable individual heterogeneity affecting both sport participation and well-being. Namely, individuals who choose to participate in sport may be genetically healthier or otherwise predisposed toward social activities and, therefore, happier even without sport participation. One traditional way to overcoming the problem of endogeneity of the variable participation in sports is to use an instrumental variable approach, as, for example, the works of Huang and Humphreys (2012) and Ruseski et al. (2014). To use this approach we need a variable that influences sport participation but not life satisfaction. Huang and Humphreys (2012) use the number of local sport facilities as an instrument to explain observed individual participation in physical activity to analyse the causal relationship between sport participation and self-reported happiness. In the same line, Ruseski et al. (2014) use data on an individual's attitudes or beliefs and proximal surrounding environment to identify sport participation. The belief factor exploited is the strength of individuals' beliefs that physical activity is important, whereas the environmental factor exploited is proximity to a sports facility. Despite the potential problem of endogeneity in the variable measuring participation in sports, in our case we are unable to address this question because we cannot find appropriate instruments in the GSOEP or other datasets available for the whole

period 1984–2011.[1] For this reason, we have employed a POLS fixed-effects model to estimate our life satisfaction equation.

## 20.4  Results

### 20.4.1  Descriptive Analysis

Figure 20.1 shows the evolution of the participation in sports and its intensity for people without and with disabilities during the period 1985–2009. Overall, we find that people with disabilities have a lower participation in sports as compared to that found for people without disabilities. For example, the percentage of people with disabilities who "*never*" participated in sports in 2009 was 64.6%, whereas for people without disabilities this percentage reached 34.6% (i.e., a differential of 30 percentage points). On the contrary, those people without disabilities who do sports "*daily/weekly*" were 39.2% of the total in comparison to the 19.1% found for people with disabilities. Similar results have been found for the categories "*seldom*" and "*monthly*". This finding is in line with the previous works of Rimmer et al. (2004), Lee and Park (2010), Klostermann and Nagel (2014), and Pagan (2015). According to Rimmer et al. (2004), the degree of participation in physical activity among people with disabilities is affected by a multifactorial set of barriers and facilitators that are unique to this population. They identify several different categories of environmental or facility barriers related to participation in physical activity among people with disabilities, such as the built environment, cost of services or programs, equipment, policies, information, and education and training of fitness facility staff. In addition, we have to take into consideration that the barriers to sports participation for people

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[1]We have tried to find the number of sport facilities in Germany by region and for the period 1984–2011 in different databases (e.g., the German Business Registry (Untemehmensregister-System, URS)). However, there is no reliable sport facility register available which covers those years used in this study and at a regional level in Germany.
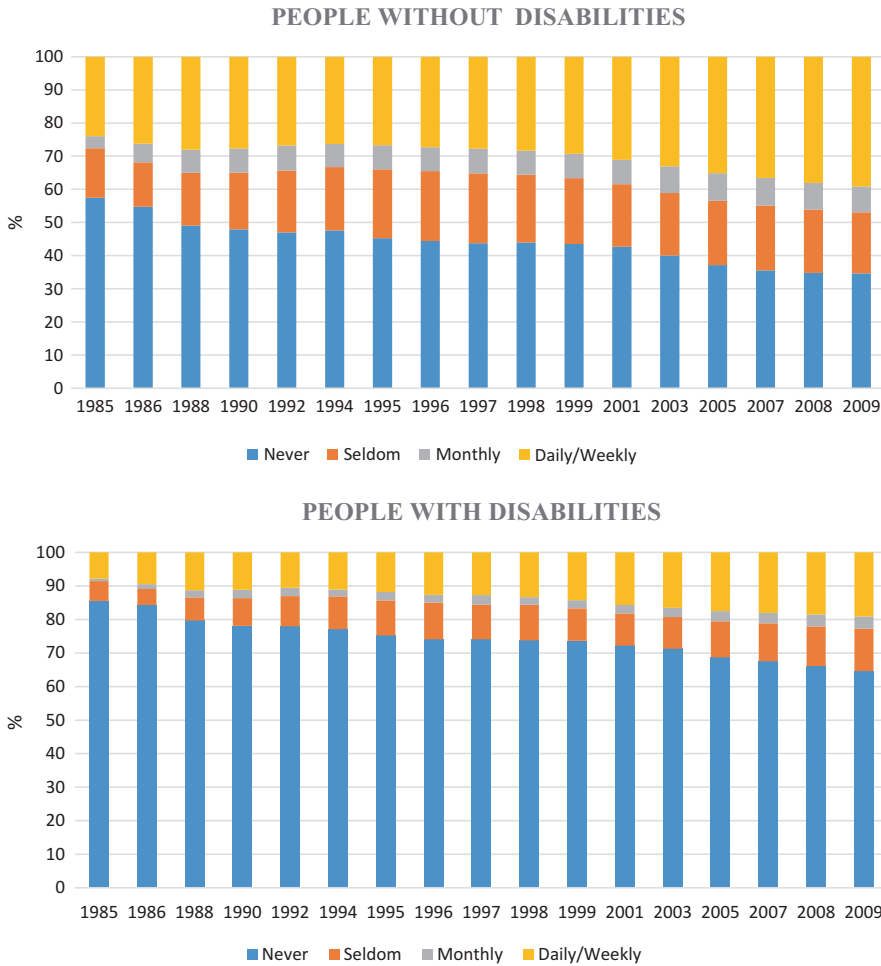
## PEOPLE WITHOUT DISABILITIES



## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



**Fig. 20.1** Participation in sports (i.e., never, seldom, monthly, and daily/weekly) for people without and with disabilities in Germany (in percentages). Note: Sample consists of individuals aged 16 or over. We have used 3-period moving averages of means at each year (for this reason the years 1984 and 2011 are not shown in this figure). Weighted data (Source: Author's calculations using the GSOEP for the period 1984–2011)

without physical disabilities differ from those for people with physical disabilities, because the former usually mention lack of time and motivation as the main barriers to sports participation (Tenenbaum and Eklund 2007). Looking at the whole period (1985–2009), we find that the participation in sports of people without and with disabilities has increased during that period. For example, a total of 23.9% of people without disabilities in 1985 had a participation in sports "*daily/weekly*", whereas in 2009 this percentage went up to 39.2% (i.e., a differential of 15.3 per-

centage points). For people with disabilities, this percentage was 7.8 and 19.2 in 1985 and 2009, respectively (i.e., 11.4 percentage points). Despite this increase in the participation in sports of people with disabilities, these percentages are still low as compared to their counterparts. In this sense, we have to remark the important and significant efforts carried out by the European Union during that period to promote physical activity and sport participation within the European Society. By way of illustration, in December 2000 the European Council's

Declaration on the specific characteristics of sport and its social function recognised that sporting organisations and member states had a primary responsibility in the conduct of sporting affairs, with a central role for sport federations. In 2007, the European Commission published a "*White Paper on Sport*", which provided strategic orientation on the role of sport within Europe. For this purpose, the document consists of three policy discussions on the role of sport in society, its economic value and its organization.[2] As for people with disabilities, this White Paper states that the Commission, in its Action Plan on the European Union Disability Strategy, will take into account the importance of sport for people with disabilities and will support member state actions in this field. Sport participation is considered as a strategic instrument to enhance the social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities among the disabled population. For the German case, Klostermann and Nagel (2014) mention that in general the sport participation grew rapidly in the late 1990s and early 2000s due to increasing awareness of the significance of sport for health. During these years there were numerous initiatives to open up sport to broader social groups in Germany (e.g., people with disabilities). In this sense, sport clubs (voluntary non-profit organisations) are one of the main sport providers to a broad population in Germany because offer affordable sport programmes in the fields of recreational and professional sport and in individual and team sports (Heinemann 1999). These sport clubs also transmit values and offer an affordable sports supply for many population groups, as, for example, people with disabilities (Breuer et al. 2015). The existence of these sport clubs and a greater number of public and private sport facilities in the last years have contributed to increasing the sport participation of people without and with disabilities in Germany.

Figure 20.2 shows the mean levels of life satisfaction reported by people without and with disabilities according to their participation in sports in Germany. In general, we find that people with disabilities have lower levels of life satisfaction as compared to people without disabilities, independently of their intensity of participation in sports. This finding is consistent with other previous studies on disability and life satisfaction (e.g., Pagan 2010 and 2012). For example, for the category "*daily/weekly*" we find that the differential of the life satisfaction scores between people without and with disabilities is 1.35 points. This differential in favour of people without disabilities is 1.54, 1.42 and 1.17 points for the categories "*never*", "*seldom*" and "*monthly*", respectively (in all cases, this differential is statistically significant at the 5% level according to a test of equality of means). Despite this differential, we observe that for both groups the levels of life satisfaction increase as the participation in sports is more intense. Namely, the more sport people do the more satisfied they are. For people without disabilities, the increase in life satisfaction is particularly high for the last two categories "*monthly*" and "*daily/weekly*" (7.2 and 7.4 points, respectively). A similar result is found in the same categories for people with disabilities (6.02 and 6.05 points, respectively), but with lower life satisfaction scores than those found for their counterparts. These initial results support our first hypothesis, i.e. participation in sports increases individuals' life satisfaction (with disabilities or not). In this sense, people with disabilities who participate in sports not only fell bigger life satisfaction but assess their psychical health more favourably than those who are not involved in sports, and tend to rely on their strengths to a greater extent, even when favourable conditions are not created for them (Mockevicienè and Savenkovienè 2012). Furthermore, the participation in sports for people with disabilities can become a powerful tool to enhance their social inclusion within the society, and thus increasing their well-being. Positive improvements in self-confidence, recognition, self-esteem, emotions, and the existence of new roles, identity and responsibilities can be obtained

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[2]Full text is available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52007DC0391
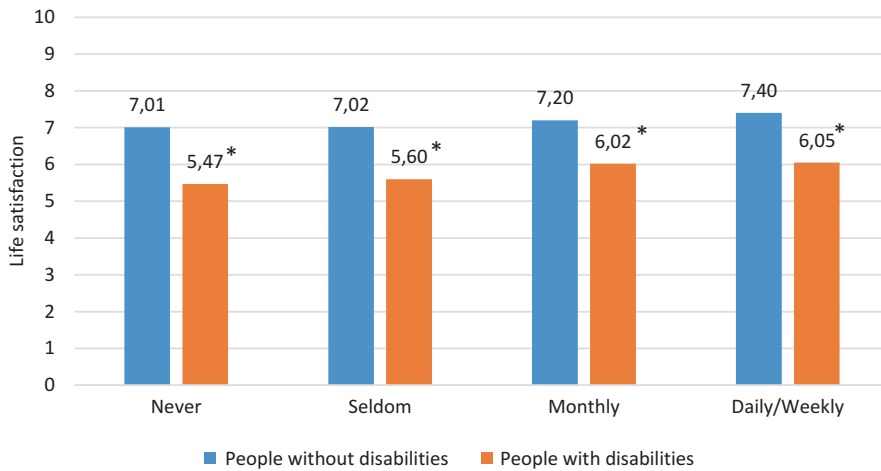
**Fig. 20.2** Life satisfaction scores by participation in sports and disability status in Germany (Source: Author's calculations using the GSOEP for the period 1984–2011. Individuals aged 16 or over. Weighted data. *Difference between people without disabilities and people with disabilities is significant at $P < 0.05$)

from sport participation, reducing the focus on the impairment or disability of the person and placing the focus on their abilities. Social leisure, such as the participation in sports, contributes to satisfying the human need for affiliation and personal development and identity formation (Richards 1999; Newman et al. 2014). For example, Helliwell and Putman (2004) mention that social networks have value for all individuals, but especially for those who are in inferior socioeconomic conditions as, for example, people with disabilities. In addition, social gatherings (e.g., through sport participation) may contribute to generating strong "*fellow feeling*" which strengthens ties among participants (Becchetti et al. 2008). However, these social interactions based in sports can vary over time and that its value through multi-sport participation may be complex (Downward and Rasciute 2011). Particularly, sport participation can even foster the social inclusion of women with disabilities who face double stigmatization in a stronger way (first, for being women and second for being disabled). We have to bear in mind that all results shown in Fig. 20.2 were obtained without controlling for other variables, which may affect the levels of life satisfaction reported by people without and with disabilities and according their intensity of sport participation.

### 20.4.2 Econometric Analysis

To start with, we have tested the appropriateness of our model choice. For this purpose, we have tested whether to estimate pooling all waves or to use the panel nature of the database. The results obtained from the Lagrange-Multiplier test confirmed that considering the panel dimension was a better option for all samples. Second, in order to choose between a POLS random-effects (RE) model and a POLS fixed-effects (FE) model, we have run a Hausman test (which tests the appropriateness of the random-effects estimator), with results corroborating that the POLS fixed-effect model was preferred in all subsamples. Third, the F test (to see whether all the coefficients in the model are different than zero) confirms the validity of our life satisfaction regressions. Fourth, we have also checked for multicollinearity between participation in sports and disability. After calculating the variance inflation factors (VIF) for each regression, the results rejected the existence of multicollinearity among these variables. Finally, we have tested the possible existence of selectivity bias in all our samples. According to Clark (1997), if dissatisfied individuals with disabilities can leave the labour market more easily than equally dissatisfied individuals without disabilities, the remaining workers with disabilities

will have higher average levels of job satisfaction (and life satisfaction) because the sample is biased. The underlying assumption is that the potential job satisfaction is related to the probability of being an employee. Furthermore and as we have panel data, there is a potential selection problem related to non-random sample attrition. If disability is linked to a higher (or lower) propensity to remain in the sample, the estimated coefficients will be biased (see Baltagi and Song 2006, for a survey of this type of bias). To test the existence of this problem, we used the method proposed by Verbeek and Nijman (1992) for panel data. This method is based on the inclusion of three additional variables in our fixed-effects model: the number of waves the ith individual participates in the panel; a binary variable taking the value 1 if and only if the ith individual is observed over the entire sample and 0 otherwise; and a binary variable indicating whether the individual was observed in the previous period. The coefficients on these additional variables are not significant at conventional levels; thus, we reject the relevance of a selectivity bias in the sample used. All these results are available upon request.

Table 20.1 shows the results obtained from the POLS fixed-effects model described in the "*data and method*" section. This table also includes the mean values of the explanatory variables used in the estimation process. Looking at these mean values and apart from finding the lower participation in sports of people with disabilities as compared to people without disabilities (and in line with the results shown in Fig. 20.2), we observe that people with disabilities are older, non-married, have lower educational levels, less presence of children in the household, out of the labour force, less likely to be a home owner, living in households with a lower number of members and have inferior levels of monthly income as compared to those individuals who are not disabled. Turning now to the estimation results, we find that in general there is a positive and significant effect of the participation in sports on the levels of life satisfaction reported by people without and with disabilities. All coefficients on the participation dummy variables for the non-

disabled and disabled samples are positive and significant at the 1% level with respect to the reference category (i.e., never), except for the category "*seldom*" for the non-disabled sample. As a result, our first hypothesis (i.e., participation in sports increases individuals' life satisfaction) is valid and in line with the previous literature on sports and life satisfaction (e.g., Rasciute and Downward 2010; Downward and Rasciute 2011; Pawlowski et al. 2011; Yazicioglu et al. 2012; Pagan 2015; and Schmiedeberg and Schroder 2016). However and looking at the size of the coefficients estimated for both samples, we find that the contribution of participation in sports to life satisfaction is quite different by disability status. Consistent with the second hypothesis (i.e., the effects of the participation in sports on life satisfaction are different for people without and with disabilities, being greater for this latter group), people with disabilities obtain greater rewards in terms of life satisfaction from their participation in sports as compared to their non-disabled counterparts. For the disabled sample, the results show that the coefficient on participating in sports "*daily/weekly*" is 0.138 points as compared to the reference category (*never*). On the contrary, the size of this coefficient for people without disabilities is only 0.074 points, i.e., 0.064 points lower. The coefficients of the remaining participation categories are also positive but lower than the previous one, i.e., there is a positive relationship between life satisfaction and intensity of participation in sports. The life satisfaction differentials between people without and with disabilities are also significant (after applying the corresponding tests) for the participation categories "*monthly*" and "*seldom*" (0.106 and 0.064 in favour of people with disabilities, respectively). Therefore, our two hypotheses are strongly supported by the results obtained from the estimation of our POLS fixed-effects model.

Some economists such as Gui (1987) and Uhlaner (1989) have introduced the concept of "*relational goods*" as "*non-material goods, which are not services that are consumed individually, but are tied to interpersonal relations* (Gui 1987, p.37)" or as "*goods that can only be*

**Table 20.1** Life satisfaction regressions for people without and with disabilities (POLS individual fixed-effects)

| | People without disabilities | | | | People with disabilities | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Coeff. | | z | Mean | Coeff. | | Z |
| **Participation in holiday trips:** | | | | | | | | |
| Daily/Weekly | 0.302 | 0.074 | *** | 10.21 | 0.145 | 0.138 | *** | 5.11 |
| Monthly | 0.069 | 0.043 | *** | 4.83 | 0.026 | 0.149 | *** | 3.43 |
| Seldom | 0.185 | 0.006 | | 0.98 | 0.098 | 0.064 | *** | 2.55 |
| Never *(reference)* | 0.445 | – | | – | 0.731 | – | | – |
| Age | 46.099 | 0.010 | | 0.28 | 60.898 | 0.049 | *** | 3.08 |
| Age $^2$/100 | 24.076 | 0.013 | *** | 6.38 | 39.564 | −0.034 | *** | −4.82 |
| **Marital status:** | | | | | | | | |
| Married *(reference)* | 0.646 | – | | – | 0.635 | – | | – |
| Single | 0.217 | −0.093 | *** | −5.80 | 0.108 | 0.120 | | 1.31 |
| Widowed | 0.060 | −0.137 | *** | −4.69 | 0.164 | −0.118 | * | −1.84 |
| Divorced | 0.062 | −0.062 | *** | −2.97 | 0.079 | −0.118 | | −1.41 |
| Separated | 0.015 | −0.228 | *** | −8.95 | 0.014 | −0.336 | *** | −3.40 |
| Years of education | 11.726 | −0.010 | *** | −2.68 | 10.964 | 0.027 | * | 1.65 |
| Log (real household income) | 5.179 | 0.118 | *** | 15.00 | 5.019 | 0.064 | ** | 2.29 |
| **Number of children:** | | | | | | | | |
| 0 *(reference)* | 0.642 | – | | – | 0.864 | – | | – |
| 1 | 0.180 | 0.046 | *** | 4.74 | 0.080 | 0.060 | | 1.36 |
| 2 | 0.134 | 0.060 | *** | 4.37 | 0.042 | 0.083 | | 1.08 |
| 3+ | 0.045 | 0.086 | *** | 4.34 | 0.015 | 0.247 | ** | 2.06 |
| **Household size:** | | | | | | | | |
| 1 *(reference)* | 0.129 | – | | – | 0.223 | – | | – |
| 2 | 0.360 | 0.060 | *** | 3.93 | 0.509 | 0.029 | | 0.51 |
| 3 | 0.219 | 0.008 | | 0.48 | 0.152 | −0.098 | | −1.44 |
| 4+ | 0.292 | −0.021 | | −1.07 | 0.116 | −0.182 | ** | −2.27 |
| **Employment status:** | | | | | | | | |
| Full-time *(reference)* | 0.455 | – | | – | 0.171 | – | | – |
| Part-time | 0.157 | −0.052 | *** | −5.46 | 0.062 | 0.015 | | 0.29 |
| Not working | 0.388 | −0.116 | *** | −12.13 | 0.767 | −0.063 | * | −1.82 |
| Home owner | 0.476 | 0.035 | *** | 4.18 | 0.429 | 0.056 | | 1.51 |
| **Region dummies** | *Yes* | | | | *Yes* | | | |
| **Year dummies** | *Yes* | | | | *Yes* | | | |
| *Constant* | – | −1.570 | | −0.77 | – | −2.504 | * | −2.47 |
| $\sigma_u$ | 0.945 | | | | 0.957 | | | |
| $\sigma_e$ | 0.718 | | | | 0.698 | | | |
| $P$ | 0.634 | | | | 0.653 | | | |
| Number of observations | 196,433 | | | | 21,235 | | | |
| Number of individuals | 39,083 | | | | 7866 | | | |

The standard errors are robust and allow for clustering at an individual level. Individuals aged 16 or over. *, **, *** imply significance of the estimated coefficients at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively. Source: Author's calculations using the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) for the period 1984–2011

*possessed by mutual agreement that they exist after appropriate joint actions have been taken by a person and non-arbitrary others* (Uhlaner 1989, p. 254)". These non-material goods range from companionship, emotional support, sympathy and intimacy to feeling part of a community with the same values or tastes. A very important dimension of relational goods is the "*reciproc-*

*ity*", i.e., they cannot be pursued independent of the situation and preferences of all other people (Uhlaner 1989). This reciprocity depends mainly on the sincerity and genuineness of the people involved (Nussbaum 1986). However, people with disabilities are still facing significant levels of social exclusion and marginalization. If people with disabilities are viewed as not being able to meet functional standards set by society, they will be not socially accepted by other members of society as peers, co-workers, or mates (Nagler 1992). As noted earlier, the "*social model of disability*" states that disability is a consequence of social, attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent people from participating in society. Disability is understood as an unequal relationship within a society in which the needs of people with impairments are often given little or no consideration. The social model implies that the removal of disabling barriers serves to improve the lives of people with disabilities, giving them the same opportunities as others. The strength of the social model lies in its focus on societal change and not on the individual adapting to the disabling environment (Pagan 2015). These barriers prevent them from gaining equal access to information, education, employment, public transport, housing and recreational opportunities. In this sense, leisure activities in general and the participation in sports in particular within the disabled population can reduce their social isolation and exclusion, and increase their levels of life satisfaction, even in a stronger way as compared to people without disabilities. In our case, the results confirm the strong effect of participation in sports on life satisfaction reported by people with disabilities, even greater than that found for people without disabilities. In any case, we have to take into consideration that the disabled population is a heterogeneous group of individuals whose disabilities affect their lives in different ways and intensity. They have different needs and face diverse obstacles and problems depending on their degree of disability (e.g., mobility problems, sight and hearing impairments, specific medical conditions, etc.) in order to participate

actively in sports. In addition, this participation in sports is in many cases very good predictors for the number of social gatherings a person has (Toepoel 2013).

As for the rest of explanatory variables included in our model, we find that for the disabled sample there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between age and life satisfaction. In contrast, only the coefficient on age squared is significant at conventional levels for the non-disabled sample. As for marital status, all coefficients are negative and significant with respect to the reference category (i.e., married), except for the coefficients on "*single*" and "*divorced*" for the disabled sample. For example, being separated has a significant and negative effect on all individuals' life satisfaction (0.228 and 0.336 points for people without and with disabilities, respectively). The variable "*years of education*" has a negative and significant effect on life satisfaction for the non-disabled sample, whereas for the disabled sample the sign of the coefficient is positive and significant at the 10% level. According to our results, the household income per capita affects positively all individuals' life satisfaction scores. The presence of one child in the household increases life satisfaction as compared to the reference category (no child), but only for the non-disabled sample. For the disabled sample, only the coefficient on having three or more children in the household is positive and significant at the 5% level. Household sizes larger than three have a negative effect on the life satisfaction reported by individuals with disabilities. In addition, the coefficient on "*two persons in the household*" for people without disabilities is positive and significant at the 1% level. In line with the previous empirical evidence, those individuals without disabilities who are part-time workers or are not working report lower life satisfaction scores than those working full-time (reference category). For the disabled sample, only the coefficient on "*not working*" is negative and significant. Being a homeowner has a positive and significant effect on life satisfaction, but only for people without disabilities.

## 20.5   Conclusions

Using longitudinal data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) for the period 1984–2011, this study has investigated the effects of participation in sports on the levels of life satisfaction reported by people without and with disabilities. We have employed a measure of disability based on the work of Burkhauser and Schroeder (2007) and have estimated a POLS individual fixed-effects model on life satisfaction by disability status. After running our regressions, the results strongly support our two hypotheses: (a) participation in sports increases individuals' life satisfaction, and (b) the effects of this participation on life satisfaction are different for people without and with disabilities, being greater for this latter group. We find that participation in sports increases the levels of life satisfaction of all individuals (with disabilities or not). However, the life satisfaction premium obtained by individuals with disabilities from their participation in sports "*daily/weekly*" is almost double that reported by people without disabilities as compared to the reference person. The coefficients on the categories "*monthly*" and "*seldom*" for the disabled sample are also significant at the 1% levels as compared to the reference category (never). This premium in favour of people with disabilities can be explained by the greater difficulties and constraints that they face when they plan to participate actively in sports (e.g., lack of transportation, inability to pay for pay for a fitness membership, lack of knowledge on where or how to exercise, and lack of understanding on the importance of exercise in improving their condition or health (Rimmer et al. 2000)), as well as by the opportunity that this participation offers people with disabilities in terms of confidence, autonomy, self-control and recognition, freedom, socialization and life satisfaction (Mockevicienè and Savenkovienè 2012; Newman et al. 2014).

From a public policy perspective, our results have shown that people with disabilities are less likely to participate in sports than people without disabilities (e.g., only 19.1% of people with disabilities do sports "*daily/weekly*", whereas for people without disabilities this percentage goes

up to 39.2%). In contrast, people with disabilities report higher levels of life satisfaction as they do sports as compared to people without disabilities. Increasing the number of people with disabilities participating in sports from an integrative and social approach must be a crucial goal for any government and community. According to Anderson and Heyne (2010), physical activity for people with disabilities is even more important than for people without disabilities because it can help ameliorate or prevent higher rates of deleterious conditions (e.g., obesity and diabetes). In this sense, the social model of disability can be used as an adequate framework to design and promote physical activity through the participation in sports and reduce the discrimination, marginalization, and stigmatization that people with disabilities suffer. Negative attitudes and stereotypes against people with disabilities can be mitigated by implementing specific sport programs for people with disabilities within a normalized environment. Furthermore, we have to take into account that physical activity levels drop from pre-injury to post-injury periods is also suggestive that disability and disability related factors (e.g., reduced social support) contribute to lower physical activity engagement (Tasiemski et al. 2006). This lack of social support (e.g., friends, relatives, sport mates, and colleagues) can become a strong barrier to participate in sports (Levinson et al. 1991). Within this context, it is essential to provide easily accessible information on participation in local sports and recreation activities. To achieve information satisfaction and fully enable access to sport facilities for people with disabilities, a more sophisticated understanding of differential needs and appropriate sources, accessible experiences, and the provision of adequate accommodation (e.g., ramps for wheelchairs) are needed. Educational programs for sport staff, health care providers, trainers, and vocational rehabilitation professionals can change attitudes towards people with disabilities and increase their levels of physical activity and sport participation. Each disability group has identifiable constraints, benefits being sought and access requirements that need to be satisfied. Sports providers must be mindful of these con-

siderations, sophisticated in their approach to addressing the access requirements and proactive in seeking strategic partnerships for those access requirements that fall outside of their scope of activities (e.g., transport and costs of participation). In many cases, the lack of support by the government is one of the strongest constraints faced by people with disabilities. The European Union and its Member States have a strong commitment to enhance the social and economic situation of people with disabilities. The European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 stresses that there are still many obstacles preventing people with disabilities from fully exercising their fundamental rights, such as the right to free movement, to choose where and how to live, and to have full access to cultural, recreational, and *sports activities*. All Member States must "*improve the accessibility of sports, leisure, cultural and recreational organisations, activities, events, venues, goods and services*" … for people with disabilities and "*to promote participation in sports events and the organisation of disability-specific ones*". "*Sport for all*" has become a key principle within the European Union and based on equal opportunities and the fight against any kind of violence and discrimination towards people with disabilities.

Finally, one of the main limitations of this study is that we do not have information on the types of disability that individuals have. We expect significant differences in the incidence of participation in sports as well as its impact on life satisfaction according to the kind of disability. Some people with disabilities may be more likely to suffer from strong barriers and difficulties to access sport facilities, equipment, information, communication, and sport professionals (e.g., those with mental and psychological disorders who experience the most negative social attitudes and discriminatory practices in workplace) and significant reduction in their levels of life satisfaction. For example, Mcdevitt et al. (2006) concluded that the perceived barriers to physical activity in people with serious and persistent mental illness were mental illness symptoms, medications, weight gain from medications, fear of discrimination, and safety concerns. However,

people with serious and persistent mental illness viewed physical activity positively, and they linked being active to improved mental health. We need additional datasets that include this information in order to shed further light on the effects of participation in sports on life satisfaction for each type of disability. Future research in this area may include the analysis of how participation in sports affects different life subdomains (e.g., income, leisure, housework, dwelling, and health) among people with disabilities, as well as the study of the impact of the onset of disability on the participation in sports (and its intensity) and life satisfaction in order to test anticipation and adaptation effects.

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# Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, Sleep Duration and Well-Being Among Estonian Schoolchildren: A Thematic Review

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## Abstract

The knowledge of the importance of physical activity (PA) during childhood and adolescence has increased internationally, but physical inactivity of children and youth is still a growing problem all over the world. It is well known that increasing screen-time and sedentary activities compete with physical activities in leisure time. The level of PA decreases during growth and maturation, but the habits of healthy lifestyle have to form in this age. Physical activity is directly associated with healthy body composition. Therefore, the promotion of PA is an essential strategy to improve the physical and mental health and well-being of schoolchildren. At the same time sleep duration of schoolchildren is often not sufficient. The schoolsetting is a good environment for population-based PA interventions to introduce healthy life-style regardless of the socio-economic status of every student involved. To take action against increasing obesity rates and sedentary behaviour, and reducing PA levels among children, a number of organizations have issued their PA recommendations. To compile present chapter, the available data about the studies with Estonian school children were used and compared with contemporary related data obtained from studies with children from foreign countries. According to the recent studies, the PA levels of Estonian children, similarly to other European children are alarmingly low. To fight the increasing level of physical inactivity, various intervention programmes should be created and implemented to increase daily PA of children. In order to develop effective intervention programmes it is essential to estimate PA, sedentary behaviour and health indicators among Estonian children. Accordingly, the present thematic review includes the contemporary data of objectively measured PA studies of Estonian schoolchildren, which were compared to the results of peers in other countries. This enables to assess the position of Estonian children in the world according to their PA habits. The benefits of PA and adverse effects of excessive sedentary time should be emphasized in all educational instances.

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## 21.1    Introduction

Physical activity (PA) in leisure time and everyday life is important for children and adults (Heath et al. 2012). The scientific consensus exists that PA, play and sports are essential

preconditions for the healthy development of children and adolescents (Hills et al. 2007). It is widely accepted that the health benefits of exercise are wide-ranging and powerful, but cognitive function and academic achievement are additional realms beyond the physical benefits of exercise (Diamond 2015). PA has effect not only on physical but also on psycho-social and emotional aspects (Diamond 2015). Increasing PA and reducing sedentary time are important factors in health promotion and prevention of lifestyle-related diseases in children and adolescents. In this regard, international guidelines recommend at least 60 min of moderate-to-vigorous PA (MVPA) every day (WHO 2010). A vast number of studies have demonstrated that the levels of PA in children and adolescents are decreasing (Dobbins et al. 2013). Low levels of PA have implications on prevalence of non-transmittable chronic diseases and on health of population in general (WHO 2010). This is especially important among children and youth (Janssen and LeBlanc 2010), since health and associated behaviours in adults seem to be strongly influenced by healthy and unhealthy behaviour developed during childhood (Gunnarsdottir et al. 2014). Research suggests that the best primary strategy for improving the long-term health of children and adolescents through exercise may be creating a lifestyle pattern of regular PA that will carry over to the adult years (Telama et al. 2014). It is generally believed that those who choose to exercise regularly also tend to adopt other positive health habits and vice versa (Pate et al. 2002). Beyond PA, age-appropriate sleep duration is vital to cognitive performance, productivity, health and well-being; and even mild sleep restriction impacts performance over a few days (Krueger et al. 2008). Unfortunately, screen time competes nowadays often with sleeping time causing adverse effects on the physical and mental health of children and youth. Thus, it is important to teach children and parents to organize their daily schedule in a healthy way.

Although it is stated that regular participation in PA is important for good health in children and adolescents, a large proportion of children are not getting sufficient levels of daily PA (Loprinzi et al. 2012). International surveys of PA highlight the epidemic of physical inactivity among children reporting consistently that fewer than 50% boys and girls are active enough to produce health benefits, that a considerebly smaller proportion of girls than boys are sufficiently active, and that activity participation declines with age during adolescence (Konstabel et al. 2014). PA is associated with numerous health benefits. The dose-response relations observed in observational studies indicate that the higher PA level, the greater the health benefit. Even modest amounts of PA can have health benefits in high-risk youngsters. To achieve substantive health benefits, the PA should be of at least a moderate intensity, while vigorous intensity activities may provide even greater health benefits (Janssen and LeBlanc 2010). Regular PA at higher intensities affects body composition, muscular fitness and bone health more than PA at lower intensities (Janssen and LeBlanc 2010). Accordingly, because of contemporary excessively sedentary lifestyle it is important to emphasize that promoting PA and replacing sedentary behaviour with PA would be beneficial for children health.

The aim of this thematic review is to focus on the importance of PA and sufficient sleep for the development of children and youth from the aspect of both physical and mental health, referring the data collected from scientific publications about recent studies. From the other side, sedentary time, its pursuits and effects on childrens' health and well-being should also be considered. The benefits of PA and adverse effects of excessive sedentary time according to contemporary scientific literature have to be emphasized to all educational instances. Another aim of the present review is to assess the level of PA and its associations with health indicators and well-being among Estonian children and compare the data with the results of similar studies in other countries. Knowledge about the time consuming and needs of Estonian children and adolescents may help to work out intervention programmes for this age group to increase their daily PA and achieve health benefits. To compile present

chapter, the available data about the studies with Estonian school children, published in international databases (Pubmed, EBSCO), were used and compared with contemporary related data obtained from studies with children from foreign countries. For the selection of refered articles databases Pubmed and EBSCO were used. Systematic search terms were as following: physical activity, sedentary time, sleep duration, health benefits of physical activity, children, adolescents. Two reviewers (EMR, JJ) independently examined each database to obtain the potential publications. Relevant articles were obtained in full, and assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The following specific inclusion criteria were used: (1) types of study designs: cross-sectional and longitudinal studies; (2) types of participants: children and adolescents; In addition, the following specific exclusion criteria were used: (1) studies without a control group that would permit comparison (2) congress abstracts, dissertations and other similar unpublished data, (3) studies in languages other than English. The initial search strategy identified 246 potentially relevant articles. Following the review of article titles and abstracts, and also excluding the duplicate articles, where the same study results were described in more than one research article, the total number of articles was reduced to 160 potentially relevant papers for the inclusion to the paper.

## 21.2 Physical Activity Recommendations for Children and Adolescents

According to WHO recommendations regarding PA for 5–17 years old children and adolescents (WHO 2010), aerobic activity, such as brisk walking (moderate) or running (vigorous) should make up the majority of the 60 min/day or more of daily PA level. At least 3 days a week should reach vigorous PA (VPA) levels. Muscle strengthening, such as gymnastics, push-ups, or playing on the playground, and bone strengthening, such as jumping rope or running, should also occur at least 3 days a week. Younger children should reach these goals mostly from free play, while adolescents can be introduced to more structured activity, workouts, and organized sports (WHO 2010). However, studies have shown high levels of obesity even though participants have exceeded the recommended amount of 60 min of daily MVPA level (Rowlands et al. 2006). It has also earlier been recommended that at least 90 min of MVPA a day for children and adolescents is needed for significant health benefits (Public Health Canada 2002). As the number of overweight and obese children and adolescents is increasing continiously, it could be suggested that current PA recommendations may not be enough (Lätt et al. 2015), and should be revised and supplemented according to contemporary needs.

### 21.2.1 The Level of Physical Activity in Children and Adolescents

It is necessary to assess the PA level of children and youth prior to create PA interventions. When the PA intervention has been implemented the need exists to compare the data obtained before and after the intervention, particularly to find out the proportion of sufficiently active children. As several differents methods of PA level assessment are used and different indicators are evaluated, the problem in comparison of different studies remains. One of the most often examined indicator is the number of children meeting current PA recommendations. Many studies have investigated the number of children compliant with the PA recommendations (Guinhouya et al. 2013). The results of these studies are often used in national reports, such as PA report cards (Kruusamäe et al. 2016; Tremblay et al. 2014), to evaluate the situation in the country and plan further interventions. Different methods are used to describe the proportion of children meeting the PA recommendations, causing difficulties in comparison of studies with each other. Some studies calculate the proportion of children compliant with MVPA recommendations by evaluating the average MVPA minutes over measured days (Riddoch et al. 2007), e.g. dividing total time

of MVPA over measured days by the number of measured days and thus giving the average number of MVPA minutes per day, or weighed average over measured days (Ortega et al. 2013; Collings et al. 2014). In contrast, other studies consider children compliant when MVPA recommendations are met on every measurement day (Kettner et al. 2013; Riso et al. 2016, 2018). Previously, Olds et al. (2007) demonstrated significant differences in compliance with MVPA recommendations between the most days and the four-day average method using subjectively measured PA data. Although objective measurement of PA is desirable for between-country analyses of PA level, differences in data reduction methodology can make comparisons problematic, thus standardisation of accelerometer data reduction methodology is needed (Cooper et al. 2015).

Studies based on self-report questionnaires demonstrate that less than 35% of children and adolescents follow the current PA recommendations (Ekelund et al. 2011). However, the accuracy of self-reports remains questionable in children and therefore accelerometers have been recommended to assess PA patterns in children objectively (Ekelund et al. 2011; Rääsk et al. 2015a). Regardless of the usefulness of the data generated using questionnaires (e.g, useful to identify, which specific PA was performed), subjective approaches of this kind are heavily prone to recall bias, social desirability and misinterpretation (Konstabel et al. 2014). Rääsk et al. (2015a) found that among 12-years-old Estonian boys, overweight and obese group overestimated and the normal weight group underestimated their MVPA levels when filling out the questionnaires. This study thus adds to the converging evidence that the weight status of participants should be taken into account when evaluating PA using questionnaires. In addition, sedentary time was better predictable in the overweight and obese group, and only very weak prediction was obtained in the normal weight group (Rääsk et al. 2015a). For the purposes of monitoring and surveillance, accelerometers provide a reasonable compromise between validity, reliability, ease of administration and cost (Troiano 2007). Accelerometry is considered as the reference method for measuring PA and sedentary time of children in free-living conditions (Bornstein et al. 2011). However, the large discrepancy in outcomes released by accelerometer data can occur due to the variety of cut-off points for MVPA among children and adolescents, hindering the definition of a clear goal towards PA promotion in Europe and worldwide. Choosing a too low or too high cut-off points can wrongly classify physically inactive children as physically active and vice versa (Abbott and Davies 2004). Another problem also exists when using accelerometers and must be taken into account. Specifically, while PA of children and adolescents usually occurs in short bouts and is sporadic, measurement of activity by accelerometers is influenced by the epoch time used (Parikh and Stratton 2011). There could be an underestimation of VPA and an overestimation of moderate PA (MPA), when a longer duration of epoch, such as 60 s, is used, especially in younger children. Calculating the average number of counts for 60 s the activity on VPA level could be not well expressed because of its short duration and activity on lower PA levels is simultaneously overestimated. Short bouts of vigorous activity are more suitable to distinguish using preferebly shorter epoch of 10 s or 5 s (Parikh and Stratton 2011).

In general, data from objectively measured international PA studies suggest that the level of PA is often not sufficient in primary school children (Tremblay et al. 2010; Kettner et al. 2013). For example, 43% of 9–11-year-old Canadian children had an average of 60 min or more MVPA per day (Colley et al. 2011), while 69% of 9–10-year-old British children achieved 60 min or more MVPA per day (Steele et al. 2009). In the USA, 42% of 6–11-year-old children obtain the recommended 60 min per day of PA (Troiano et al. 2008). Cooper et al. (2015) compared the objectively measured PA level among children from different countries, using The International Children's Accelerometry Database (ICAD) ActiGraph accelerometer data from 20 studies from ten countries. Analyses were conducted on 27,637 participants (2.8–18.4 years) who provided at least three days of valid accelerometer

data. It was found that at the age 9–10 years, the difference between the least physically active population (Madeira, Portugal) and the most physically active population (Oslo, Norway) was 15–20% (Cooper et al. 2015). At the age 12–13 years, even larger differences were seen (26–28% between the highest and lowest countries). Alongside with Australia, the three Northern European countries (Denmark, Estonia and Norway) reported the highest PA levels at the age 9–10 years achieving recommended amount of PA on more than half of measurement days (Cooper et al. 2015). In all analysed countries, a low percentage of participants met the guidelines of achieving 60 min of MVPA in every day. Among 5–17 year olds in the ICAD database as a whole, only 9% of boys and 1.9% of girls achieved the recommendation of 60 min MVPA daily. Across the countries, the highest percentage recorded was 13% among Norwegian boys. In comparison, ≥60 min of MVPA were accumulated on a substantially higher percentage of days (46% of valid days for boys and 22% for girls), with Norwegian boys aged 9–10 years meeting or exceeding 60 min of MVPA on 60.5% of measured days, but similar values were recorded by boys from Estonia and Australia (Cooper et al. 2015). These analyses show consistent differences in PA by age and gender and also identify between-country differences in activity levels. Further studies of between country differences in PA are needed to find out the determinants of the differences observed in this study. Such studies are recommended since finding determinants of PA may facilitate the creation of new intervention programmes to enhance PA of children.

In recent years, PA level of Estonian children has been objectively measured using accelerometers and widely used cut-off points of Evenson et al. (2008) in several studies which allows us to compare the results of our children with the data of other countries. Among a heterogeneous group of 2–10-year-old Estonian children, 26.8% boys and 13% girls met the daily recommendations of 60 min MVPA (Konstabel et al. 2014). A recent study by Riso et al. (2018) revealed that 4.3% of 10–12-year-old Estonian children met the current PA recommendations of 60 min or more MVPA

per day. At the same time, 36.5% of children obtained 60 min or more MVPA when the average MVPA over measured 7 days was assessed. Another recent study with Estonian schoolchildren demonstrated that almost 11% of 7–9-year-old children were compliant with current PA recommendations, whereas 13% of boys and 9% of girls achieved daily recommended 60 min of MVPA (Riso et al. 2016). More than half of the children (60.5%) were engaged in 60 min or more MVPA over all measured days (Riso et al. 2016). Mooses et al. (2016) evaluated the level of PA of 6–13-year-old Estonian children and showed that 23.7% of children were compliant with current PA recommendations. On average over all measured days, 51.7% of children achieved the recommended PA level of 60 min of daily MVPA (Mooses et al. 2016).

Self-reported data from 14 to 16 years old Estonian adolescents show that about 54% of boys and 42% of girls considered themselves to be sufficiently physically active (Prochaska et al. 2001). In this study, PA was assessed using a modified version of the PACE + (Patient-Centred Assessment and Counselling for Exercise Plus Nutrition) adolescent PA measure (Prochaska et al. 2001). When compared with accelerometry, this measure has been reported to have acceptable validity in assessing non-compliance with PA recommendations (Ridgers et al. 2012). Although the number of compliant children and adolescents is relatively small in several studies with Estonian children, the average time of studied sample engaged in MVPA enhances 60 min (Riso et al. 2016; Mooses et al. 2016; Lätt et al. 2015, 2016; Rääsk et al. 2015b; Ortega et al. 2013; Nilsson et al. 2009). The results from objective PA measurement studies with Estonian schoolchildren in last years are in full accordance with the results of peers in other countries. It must be still emphasized that the urgent need exists to enhance the time spent in daily MVPA among Estonian children.

According to the results of recent studies with children and youth, MPA forms a bigger part of achieved daily MVPA (Riso et al. 2016; Kettner et al. 2013). Ortega et al. (2013) found that those children with low levels of VPA were more likely

to be overweight compared to those who had high levels of VPA. In several studies with children, VPA constitutes a marginal part of daily physical activities (Riso et al. 2016, 2018; Spittaels et al. 2012; Kettner et al. 2013). The importance of VPA for developing child cannot be over-estimated because of its significant effects on healthy body composition and physical fitness. Martinez-Gomes et al. (2010) suggested that approximately 20 min of VPA discriminated more accurately between normal weight, overweight and obese children compared to 60 min of MVPA. It is demonstrated that children whose VPA levels are higher tend to gain less weight over time and that VPA is the component of total PA that appears most strongly associated with different indices of adiposity (Mitchell et al. 2013; Andersen et al. 2004). The findings of Riso et al. (2016) suggest that MPA, VPA and consequently MVPA were negatively associated with indices of adiposity and positively with fat-free mass (FFM) independent of each other in 7–9-year-old Estonian children. Similarly to abovementioned results, VPA was positively associated with FFM after adjusting for several confounders such as fat mass (FM), age and gender in14–15-year-old adolescents (Jiménez-Pavón et al. 2013). It has been suggested that MPA and MVPA with longer duration have greater effects on muscular component of the body of a growing child (Johannsen et al. 2012), while PA could negatively influence FM by increasing total energy expenditure and daily PA at higher intensity levels can be conducive to influence muscle mass (Jiménez-Pavón et al. 2013). It is also suggested that the increase in muscle mass has an additional effect on total energy expenditure due to its own metabolic requirements (Johannsen et al. 2012). However, these assumptions should be confirmed in future studies.

Although it has been stated that preferely more sedentary activities would be replaced by PA (Spittaels et al. 2012), PA guidelines that include recommendations regarding light intensity physical activity (LPA) still do not exist

(Poitras et al. 2016). This research gap may be due to the historical focus on MVPA (Tremblay et al. 2010; Marshall and Ramirez 2011), and the widespread use of subjective assessments of PA (Janssen and LeBlanc 2010; Trost et al. 2011), which cannot accurately register LPA (e.g. various incidental activities accumulated throughout the day) (Tremblay et al. 2007). Dichotomizing LPA into high and low categories, Carson et al. (2013) showed favourable associations between "high LPA" (defined as 800 counts/min to <4 METs) and cardiometabolic biomarkers, and no relationships for "low LPA" (100–799 counts/min) with cardiometabolic parameters. Thus current cut-off points for LPA may not effectively differentiate LPA from sedentary time (Carson et al. 2013). While the significance of MVPA cannot be overstated, this research has resulted in a narrow focus on 1 h of the 24-h period (<5% of each day), and emerging evidence suggests that all intensities of PA (including LPA) may be important for health promotion and disease prevention (Carson et al. 2013). This is unfortunate, as studies from Canada, USA and Belgium indicate that children and youth spend 4–6 h/day in LPA (Chaput et al. 2014b; Spittaels et al. 2012; Colley et al. 2011). The recent results about Estonian children also demonstrate that children are engaged with LPA about 4–6 h/day (Riso et al. 2016; Rääsk et al. 2015b; Vaitkeviciute et al. 2014). Emerging research suggests that spending more waking hours in LPA compared with sedentary pursuits may provide some health benefits (Spittaels et al. 2012; Tremblay et al. 2007, 2011a). It would be a realistic and practical strategy for inactive children to gradually increase PA, by moving from inactivity to LPA and to MVPA. Promoting LPA may be particularly meaningful for girls who are likely to engage in less MVPA than boys (Kwon et al. 2011). Often a neglected aspect of regular PA, actively commuting to and from school can be an important possibility of PA for school-aged children. Faulkner et al. (2009) provided a systematic review describing whether children who actively commute to school are more physically active

than children who travel by motorized transport. It has been demonstrated that children who actively commute to school, most often achieved by walking, were more physically active than those children who used motorized transport to school. Promoting daily routine activities, such as active commuting to school, may have important health implications. Children who walk or cycle to school have higher daily levels of PA than those who travel to school by car or bus. Active commuting by cycling has shown to be related to a higher cardiorespiratory fitness level (Andersen et al. 2009; Cooper et al. 2006), which is known to be a marker of PA and health in children and adolescents (Ortega et al. 2008). Commuting to/from school is a daily activity highly influenced by environmental and cultural factors that are specific for each country and geographical area (Faulkner et al. 2009). Chillon et al. (2010) assessed the proportion of active commuting children and adolescents in a sample of Estonian and Swedish students. Their results showed that 56% of Estonian and 68% of Swedish schoolchildren used active transport for school travel, whereas the Swedish participants showed significantly higher level of cycling to school. Environmental factors like bike trails and traffic lights make commuting patterns highly country-specific. As a change from motorized transport to active commuting likely will increase overall PA level (i.e. total energy expenditure), promoting active commuting throughout childhood and into adulthood should still be a target for public health (Nilsson et al. 2009). It can be concluded that promoting active transport among children and parents would add valuable time of PA to daily activities of all age groups.

In conclusion, Estonian children show PA level and proportions of PA in different activity levels which are mainly comparable with the children of other countries. The children of several other culturally and geographically similar countries still exceed our children in PA level and thus exertions have to be done to reach the level of neighbour countries to obtain more benefits from PA.

## 21.2.2 Gender-Based Differences in Physical Activity Levels in Children and Adolescents

It has been demonstrated that Estonian boys have higher daily MVPA levels than girls on average from the age of 5 years onwards and also a larger range in daily MVPA levels (Konstabel et al. 2014). These differences in MVPA are in accordance with previous studies and could be largely explained by socio-cultural reasons such as more VPA outside the school, during school physical education and more participation in sports teams in boys (Sallis et al. 1996). These results together suggest that boys are more physically active in comparison with girls. Although the PA of students in Estonian primary schools is similar among both genders more attention should be payed to avoid the backwardness of girls in higher grades of basic school.

Early puberty is a formation period of healthy lifestyle habits and thus it is important to explore the associations between movement behaviours and sleep duration with adiposity values in children of this age group (Hjorth et al. 2014). Puberty has been shown to be the period of significant decreasing PA both in boys and girls (Ortega et al. 2013; Troiano et al. 2008). It also appears that maturation level is associated with a changed sleep patterns in addition to changes in PA level (Troiano et al. 2008). It has also often been shown that already prepubertal boys are more physically active than girls of the same age (Kettner et al. 2013; Verloigne et al. 2012). Levels of PA have been found to decrease with age and maturation in adolescence, with girls being significantly less physically active than boys in most countries and regions worldwide (Vilhjalmsson and Kristjansdottir 2003). Possible explanations for these gender disparities include the opinion that competitive activities may appeal more to boys, while girls may focus more on health and fitness (Vilhjalmsson and Kristjansdottir 2003).

As the question still remains as to whether the gender based differences in different PA intensity levels among primary school children exist

(Konstabel et al. 2014), recent study found no differences in measured PA levels between 7 and 9-year-old Estonian boys and girls (Riso et al. 2016). This finding could be marked as very positive, as it has often been considered that boys were more physically active than girls, especially at MVPA and VPA levels already at the primary school age (Kettner et al. 2013; Steele et al. 2009). This pattern of PA behaviour tends to continue among adolescents (Moliner-Urdiales et al. 2010; Deforche et al. 2009). To evaluate the PA behaviour among 10–12-year-old Estonian children, the PA levels of different intensities were objectively assessed, and gender-based differences in MVPA and VPA levels were found with boys presenting significantly higher PA levels in comparison with girls (Riso et al. 2018). This finding is in accordance with several studies which have revealed that boys are more physically active than girls, especially on MVPA and VPA levels already at the primary school age (Chaput et al. 2014a; Laguna et al. 2013).

In conclusion, as many researchers have shown that PA behaviour changes during puberty and in particular among girls it would be beneficial to work out available intervention programmes to encourage adolescent girls to be more physically active.

### 21.2.3 Differences in Physical Activity Level Between Weekdays and Weekend Days in Children and Adolescents

In schoolchildren, weekdays and weekend days are likely to provide different opportunities for PA, as well as school time compared with leisure-time within a weekday. Type of days or periods within a day typically representing lower levels of PA and increased sedentary time can be distinguished and such information helps the planning of PA interventions aiming to promote increased levels of daily PA (Nilsson et al. 2009). In a recent study, 7–9-year-old Estonian children

were less physically active during the weekend days than during weekdays, despite more available time for different physical activities during the weekend days (Riso et al. 2016). Similar results have also been demonstrated in German primary school children (Kettner et al. 2013). It is also interesting to note that during weekend days the observed Estonian children spent less time in sedentary than during weekdays, but the percentage of sedentary time spent was still similar to weekdays (Riso et al. 2016). In addition, we have found the same pattern of weekday and weekend day PA behaviour among 10–12-years old Estonian children (Fig. 21.1) (Riso et al. 2018). In another study with 9-year-old Estonian boys and girls, it was also shown that children were more physically active on weekdays as compared with weekend days (Nilsson et al. 2009). Also the 9-years old children in Denmark, Portugal and Norway showed consistent between-day differences for time spent at MVPA, indicating higher levels of MVPA during weekdays (Nilsson et al. 2009). The reason for this can be the participation in physical education classes and organized sport during weekdays and in several cases, the active transport as well as to school and leisure time activities, such as sports clubs or other hobbies (Nilsson et al. 2009). This finding is in accordance with the results by Ridgers et al. (2014), who considered that Australian children appear to compensate their PA levels between days. Negative associations were found between time spent in MVPA and LPA on a given day and PA of the following day among Australian children (Ridgers et al. 2014). This suggests that for every additional minute of PA, children engaged in less PA (e.g. LPA) on the following day, which is consistent with the "activitystat" hypothesis, whereby individuals compensate for the increased PA levels on 1 day by decreasing their PA levels on the following day (Ridgers et al. 2014).

In conclusion, in the light of the results of childrens' PA during weekdays and weekend days from several studies carried out in different countries the need exists to encourage youth to use their own initiative and to be more physically
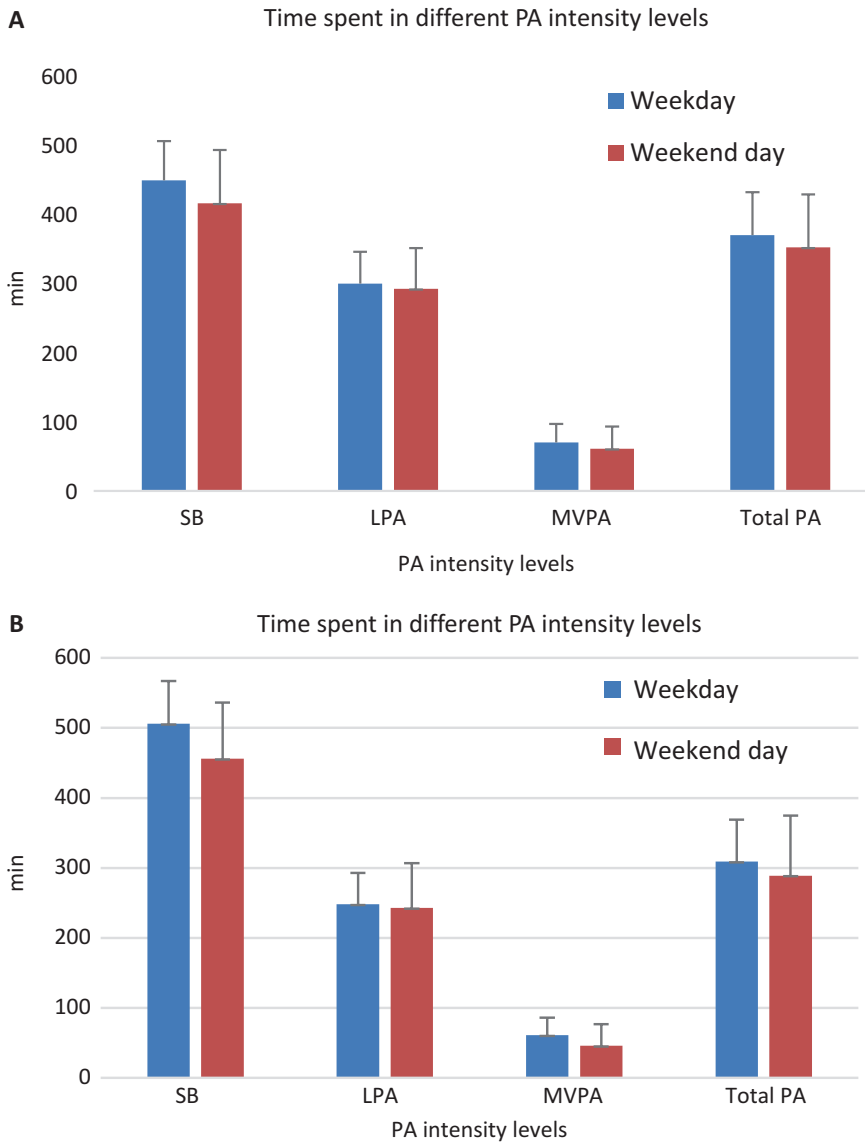
**Fig. 21.1** (**a**) Time spent in different PA level on weekdays and weekend days among Estonian primary school children (Compiled from Riso et al. 2016). (**b**) Time spent in different PA intensity level among Estonian basic school children (Compiled from Riso et al. 2018)

active on weekend days beyond organized activities. As the data of time spent physically active and sedentary during weekdays and weekend days resemble in different countries it seems that the students' habits of PA during the week are similar regardless their native country. Among Estonian children the same pattern of the PA distribution through the week can be observed as in other European countries.

## 21.2.4 Sedentary Behaviour and Time in Children and Adolescents

Research on the associations between movement behaviours and health for the potentially remaining 23 h per day after being spent 60 min of MVPA has traditionally been less abundant (Chaput et al. 2014b; Owen et al. 2010), and it is

considered to be very necessary to plan activities for healthy lifestyle. From a health perspective it is suggested to promote a positive balance between time spent in LPA and sedentary behaviour (Spittaels et al. 2012).

Sedentary behaviour or inactivity contains activities that do not increase energy expenditure substantially above the resting level, such as sleeping, sitting, lying down, and watching television (TV), and other forms of screen-based entertainment (Pate et al. 2008). Sedentary behaviour includes activities that involve energy expenditure equivalent to 1 metabolic equivalent units (METs) to 1.5 METs (Pate et al. 2008).

Results of previous studies have shown that lower sedentary behaviour of any type was associated with favourable health indicators (Tremblay et al. 2011b). In particular, more than 2 h of TV viewing per day was associated with unfavourable measures of body composition, physical fitness, self-esteem, pro-social behaviour, and academic achievement (Tremblay et al. 2011b). The first Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children and Youth aged 5–17 years represent the first sedentary behaviour guidelines in the world (Tremblay et al. 2011a). The main recommendation within the guidelines was to limit recreational screen time (e.g. TV, computer, electronic games) to less than 2 h per day with additional health benefits found in association with lower screen time (Tremblay et al. 2011a). Smartphones, tablets, and other small screens have become readily available and are now frequently used by children and youth (Tremblay et al. 2011a) and compete with physically more active leisure time activities.

In another study about the relations between sedentary behaviour and mental health indicators demonstrated strong association between high duration of screen time and some mental health indicators, including hyperactivity/inattention problems, internalizing problems, and perceived quality of life (Suchert et al. 2015). Strong evidence for an association between screen time and weight status has also been found among adolescent girls (Costigan et al. 2013). Screen time was also associated with unfavourable physical fitness,

psychological well-being, and depression in a given study (Costigan et al. 2013).

Sedentary time as a substantial part of daily activities is often assessed in objectively measured PA investigations. Sedentary time of Estonian schoolchildren has also been assessed in several recent studies. It can be concluded that time spent sedentary increases among children with age with the simultaneous decrease of PA (Fig. 21.2). The objectively measured sedentary time in 7–9-year-old Estonian children was 435 ± 56 min/day and did not differ between boys and girls (Riso et al. 2016), while 10–12-year-old Estonian children spent sedentary 494 ± 55 min/day, and the gender-based differences were not found similarly to younger children (Riso et al. 2018). The other recent studies with Estonian schoolchildren showed that daily sedentary time of 10–12-year-old boys was 542 ± 72 min/day (Lätt et al. 2015). The question remains if the overweight children spend more time in sedentary activities as compared with their normal-weight peers. There was no difference in sedentary time between 7-year-old normal weight and overweight/obese German children, while normal weight children spent more time in LPA than their overweight/obese counterparts (498 ± 68 vs. 467 ± 66 min/day) (Kettner et al. 2013). However, overweight/obese children spent more time in MPA and VPA than normal weight children, resulting in their higher MVPA levels which should be considered a rather unexpected result (Kettner et al. 2013), whereas among Estonian primary school children the sedentary time did not differ between normal weight and overweight participants (Riso et al. 2016). In addition, Ortega et al. (2013) found that the objectively measured weekly sedentary time per day was 462 min in a cohort of 15-year-old Estonian adolescents. It is well known that a notable part of childrens' day is engaged with sedentary activities, as well as with educational pursuits and spending leisure time with different screens. Spittaels et al. (2012) registered that about 52% of the day was engaged with sedentary activities in Belgian primary school children. The study with Canadian 9–11-year-old schoolchildren has shown that
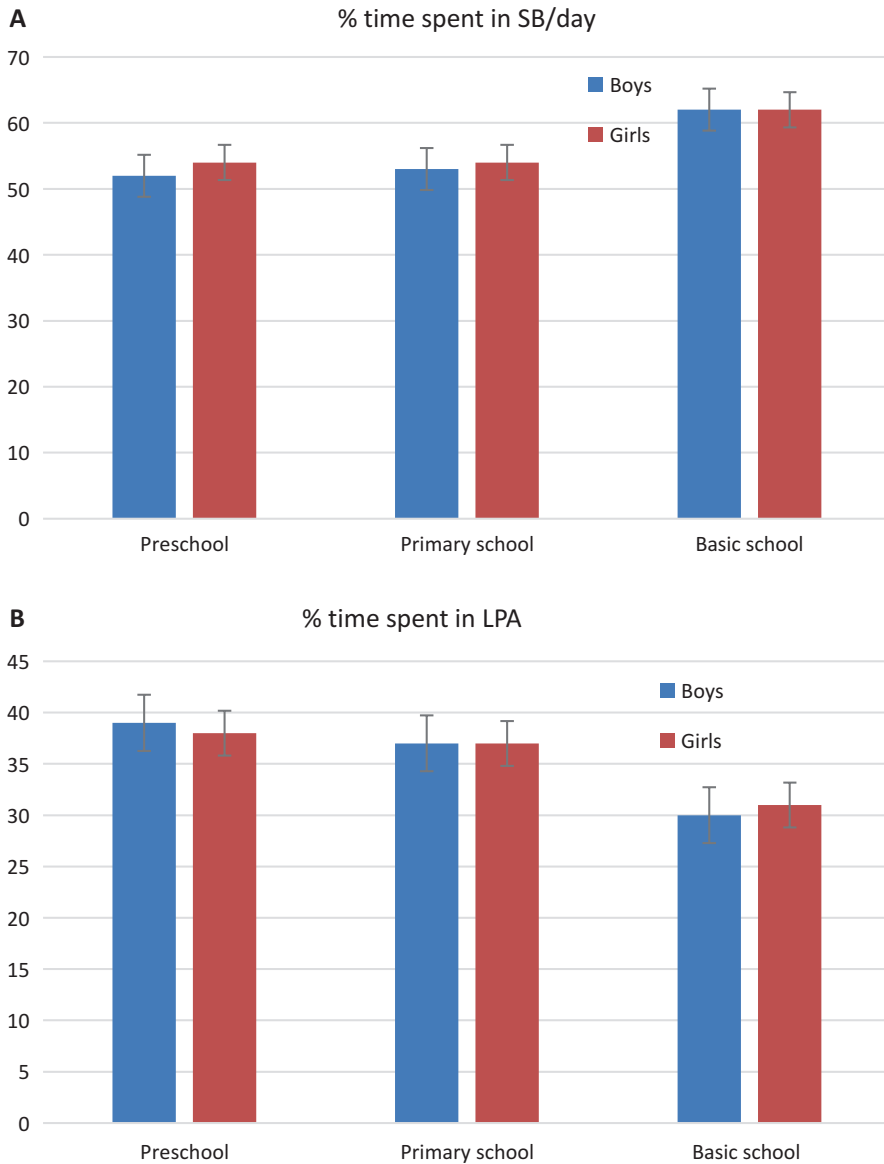
**Fig. 21.2** (**a**) Percentage of time spent in sedentary behaviours among Estonian children according to age and gender (Compiled from Riso et al. 2016, 2018). *SB* sedentary behaviour. (**b**) Percentage of time spent in LPA among Estonian children according to age and gender (Compiled from Riso et al. 2016, 2018). *LPA* light physical activity. (**c**) Percentage of time spent in MVPA according to age and gender (Compiled from Riso et al. 2016, 2018). *MVPA* moderate to vigorous physical activity. *-$p < 0.05$ as compared with girls. (**d**) Percentage of time spent in physical activities according to age and gender (Compiled from Riso et al. 2016, 2018)

**C**

% time spent in MVPA
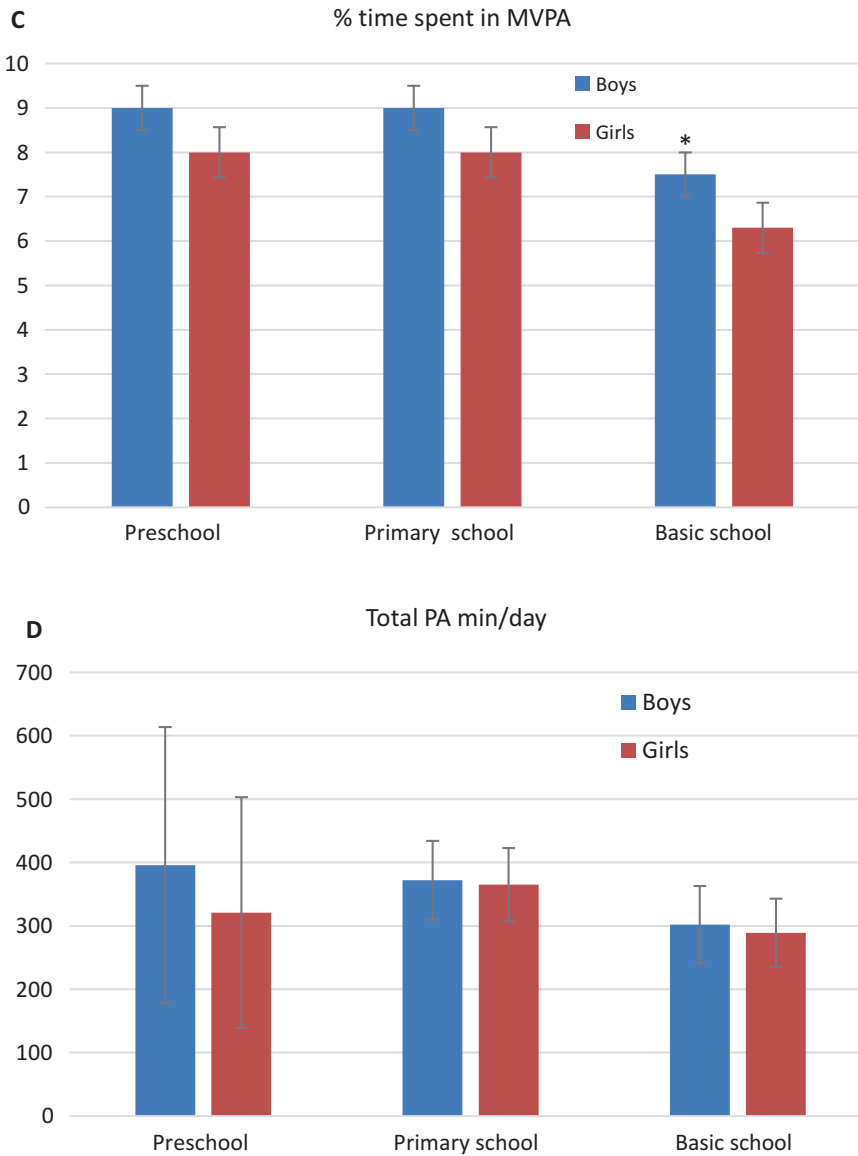


**D**

Total PA min/day



**Fig. 21.2** (continued)

sedentary time accounted for 57% of their daily activities (Chaput et al. 2014a). It is interesting to note that Basterfield et al. (2012) found that sedentary time performed roughly up to 80% of the daily activities among British 7–9-year-old children. As compared with the above-mentioned results, the sedentary time of our studied Estonian primary school children (54%) is similar to their peers in most other countries (Riso et al. 2016).

The results of our study as well as in other studies (Nilsson et al. 2009; Spittaels et al. 2012) show that it is important to reduce sedentary time among growing children. Intergrating PA to traditional sedentary pursuits may be beneficial to health and cognitive abilities of children.

In conclusion, the proportion of sedentary time in daily schedule is rather high among the children in Estonia and also other countries.

Being sedentary is inevitable during academic classes and doing home works and thus more attention should be payed on PA in leisure time, reduction of screen use as entertainment and integration of PA to daily activities to avoid the adverse effects of excessive sitting.

### 21.2.5  Sleep Duration, Related Health Indicators and Associations with Physical Activity in Children and Adolescents

Sleep is vital to cognitive performance, productivity, health and well-being; and even mild sleep restriction impacts performance over a few days (Krueger et al. 2008). Findings from cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have found negative effect of short sleep duration to overweight/obesity status in children, adolescents and adults (Chaput et al. 2007; Eisenmann et al. 2006). Sleep duration is important in the regulation of body weight homeostasis by influencing the production of key hormones of FM, such as leptin and ghrelin (Spiegel et al. 2004). Another potential mechanism when short sleep duration may result in obesity could be morning tiredness, which may have adverse effect on PA and promote sedentary behaviour. Although this mechanism has been consistently suggested (Ozturk et al. 2009), there is little empirical data supporting a link between sleep duration and physical inactivity/activity. The available information between sleep duration and sedentary behaviour in children and adolescents is mainly based on self-reported behaviours such as TV viewing and time spent in front of the computer, which generally suggests a higher sedentary time in short sleepers (Ozturk et al. 2009). Sleep as an essential component of healthy development in children and adolescents is required for their physical and mental health. However, sleep deprivation has become widespread in contemporary societies (Ohayon 2012).

School-aged children and adolescents generally sleep less nowadays compared with some years ago. Factors responsible for this secular decline in sleep duration are generally the result of the modern way of living (e.g. artificial light, late-night screen time, caffeine use, and no bedtime rules in the household). Sleep problems in adolescents are common and sleep disruption is in relation with a wide range of behavioral, cognitive, and mood impairments. Biological studies indicate considerable changes in sleep architecture during adolescence, such as changes in melatonin secretion and a need for greater total sleep time, possibly due to the maturational changes in the neuronal connectivity (Sarchiapone et al. 2014).Accordingly, the importance of healthy sleeping habits of pubertal children must be emphasized to ensure their physical and mental health. Several clinical studies in adolescents have consistently reported that reduced hours of sleep are associated with emotional problems such as depressive and anxiety symptoms (Reigstad et al. 2010). Chronic sleep loss and associated sleepiness and daytime well-being impairments cause serious threats to the academic success, health, and safety of children and youth and are important public health issues (Owens 2014).

An assessment of the relationships between sleep duration and various health indicators, including daily PA level is important to determine if the current sleep duration recommendations are evidence-informed in children and adolescents. The National Sleep Foundation recommends sleeping between 9–11 h/night for school-aged children (ages 6–13 years) and 8–10 h/night for adolescents (ages 14–17 years) to augment overall health and well-being (Hirshkowitz et al. 2015). The average sleep duration of the 10–12 years old Estonian children for the whole week was approximately 9.5 h, which could be considered sufficient for this age group (Riso et al. 2018). In another study, Ortega et al. (2011) assessed the sleep duration among 9–16 years old Estonian children and found that 19% of study participants slept fewer than 10 h/night. It is common that children and adolescents sleep longer on weekend days than on weekdays. The results of Chen et al. (2014b) also reveal this finding showing that in contrast to sleep duration on weekdays, adolescents slept approximately

1.5 h longer on weekend days (7.60 vs 9.23 h/night). Similar values were also found among 10–12-year-old Estonian children (Riso et al. 2018). According to their results of self-reported sleep duration, 19% of 9–16-year-old Estonian and Swedish children and adolescents sleep more than 10 h/night (Ortega et al. 2011). Therefore, participants sleeping longer than 10 h spent more time on PA of all intensities and less time on sedentary activities than those sleeping shorter durations. However, these associations with PA became non-significant after additional adjustment for age or sexual maturation (Ortega et al. 2011).

Lack of sufficient sleep on weekdays and following sleep compensation on weekend days has been found in children (Chen et al. 2014) and adolescents (Li et al. 2010). These studies suggest that the practice of insufficient sleep is widespread among school-aged children through high school adolescents. Gender differences in weekday insufficient sleep duration have also been found in China whereas adolescent boys slept less that girls (46.9% vs 54.8%) (Li et al. 2010), which is very similar to the results of a study in Spanish adolescents aged 13–18.5 years (Ortega et al. 2010). Compared with their peers in Australia (mean 8.3 h during schooldays) (Short et al. 2013) and Belgium (mean 10.0 h) (Spruyt et al. 2005), Chinese adolescents slept approximately 20 min to nearly 2 h and 30 min fewer (Li et al. 2010). The difference in sleep duration could have physiological significance since previous research showed that even a modest change in sleep duration (~40 min on three consecutive nights) can improve (in the case of extension) or worsen (in the case of restriction) adolescents' neurobehavioral functioning (Sadeh et al. 2003).

There is also inter-individual variability in sleep needs (e.g. because of genetic differences or sociocultural reasons) and sleeping longer or shorter than the recommended times may not absolutely mean that it will adversely affect health in children and adolescents. However, individuals with sleep durations different from the normal range may be engaging in behavioural sleep restriction or may have other health problems. Intentionally restricting sleep duration over a prolonged period of time may compromise overall health (Hirshkowitz et al. 2015).

In growing children, the contemporary trend is increasing towards insufficient sleep, which may be connected with sleep-mediated consequences such as being overweight or obese (Chaput et al. 2016). Several previous studies in younger children have shown that physical exercise compared to sedentary activities may account for longer sleep, as sleep duration is positively associated with the PA level (Khan et al. 2015; von Kries et al. 2002). In very few studies, PA level, sedentary time and sleep duration have been investigated at the same time among 9–11-year-old children (Chaput et al. 2014; Hjorth et al. 2014). Overall sleep duration was negatively associated with body fat% and positively associated with FFM after adjustment for several confounders, such as age, gender and biological maturity (Chaput et al. 2014). However, the associations among PA, sedentary time and sleep duration with excess adiposity in 10–12-year-old children should be more precisely defined as the results of previous studies are rather controversial (Chaput et al. 2014; Hjorth et al. 2014). For example, Chaput et al. (2014) found that higher levels of MVPA are associated with lower adiposity notwithstanding of sedentary time and sleep duration in 9–11-year-old Canadian children. In contrast, Hjorth et al. (2014) reported that low PA and short sleep duration were independently associated with higher fat mass index in 8–11-year-old children. As sleep influences physical and emotional well-being in adolescents (Chen et al. 2008), it is necessary to evaluate the associations of sleep duration and PA level with body composition parameters. In the recent study of Riso et al. (2018) with 10–12-years old Estonian children it was suggested that both sleep duration and MVPA were independently associated with body composition parameters. Higher levels of MVPA were associated with lower body fat% and waist-to-height ratio regardless of sleep duration.

In conclusion, although there still exist controversial data about the relation of sleep duration,

PA level and body composition indices, it is beyond of all doubt that the healthy sleep duration is important for physical and mental development of growing children and needs more attention in contemporary life. Despite the findings of our recent studies that the sleep duration of Estonian children in mostly sufficient it is still necessary to emphasize the importance of sleep on health and well-being as many leisure-time screen activities tend to compete with sleeping.

## 21.3 Health Benefits of Physical Activity in Children and Adolescents

Physical activity and exercise in leisure time and everyday life is important for people of all ages (Heath et al. 2012). For adults, the body of evidence is large that sufficient PA may prevent a series of chronic diseases, e.g. cancer, cardiovascular risk factors and diseases, or problems of the musculoskeletal system (Haskell et al. 2007). Physical fitness is also a protective health factor independently of the body FM (Lee et al. 2005). However, the PA level is directly related to different physical fitness measures in children and adolescents (Ekelund et al. 2014). It has to be taken into account that the relationship between PA and health outcomes is less conclusive in children compared with adults (Riddoch 1998). Studies using objective monitoring of PA have shown beneficial associations between PA and health-related outcomes, such as obesity (Ekelund et al. 2004), insulin resistance (Brage et al. 2004), and clustered metabolic risk (Andersen et al. 2004; Ekelund et al. 2006). Ekelund et al. (2012) demonstrated that MVPA was associated with all measured cardio metabolic outcomes such as waist circumference, systolic blood pressure, fasting triglycerides, high-density lipoprotein-cholesterol and insulin independent of sex, age, monitor wear time, time spent sedentary and waist circumference. Accordingly, these associations would be discussed further more precisely while being often connected with each other, thereby affecting health and physical fitness.

### 21.3.1 Physical Activity and Body Composition in Children and Adolescents

Obesity and cardiovascular diseases in adults are thought to have their roots in childhood and adolescence as obesity is now the most common chronic disease in childhood (CDC 2015) High levels of adiposity are associated with low levels of cardiovascular fitness (CVF) (Gutin et al. 2005). Overweight in adolescence has been found to be associated with cardiovascular mortality (Must et al. 1992) and obese children usually become obese adults (Serdula et al. 1993). Puberty is one of the most sensitive periods when weight gain occurs, and usually this is accompanied by a decrease in PA level (Riddoch et al. 2009). Overweight and obesity among children and adolescents are increasing, and it could be suggested that current PA recommendations may not be enough. Some studies have shown that rather VPA (Martinez-Gomez et al. 2010; Ortega et al. 2007) than MPA (Ruiz et al. 2006; Gutin et al. 2005) plays a key role in decreasing the risk of being overweight or obese in children and adolescents. Time spent in VPA emerged to be the most significant predictor of various adiposity indices (Parikh and Stratton 2011). Ortega et al. (2007) found that children with low levels of VPA were more likely to be overweight compared to those who had high levels of VPA. While Martinez-Gomes et al. (2010) suggested that approximately 20 min VPA discriminated more accurately between normal weight, overweight and obese categories compared to 60 min MVPA. In addition, Wittmeier et al. (2008) considered that 15 min VPA was associated with favourable body composition values, whereas 45 min MPA would be required to gain the same benefit. The boys not achieving about 60 min MVPA daily including 10–14 min VPA daily had approximately 2.5 times increased risk of being overweight and 4.3 times increased risk of being obese in later adolescence compared to those boys who met the requirements (Lätt et al. 2015). It seems that the recent WHO global recommendation for children and adolescents to participate

in at least 60 min of MVPA per day is not sufficient to prevent overweight or obesity in later adolescence. It should be mentioned that the criteria of 60 min MVPA daily should include some VPA to have any significant impact on body-weight status (Lätt et al. 2015; Wittmeier et al. 2008).

The close relationship between PA level and obesity is not a new concept, and with one in three kids now considered overweight or obese, there is an urgent need for approach to treating childhood obesity (Diamond 2015). Children spend a big part of their day in school, and many of the lifestyle and behaviour choices associated with obesity develop during the school age years (Diamond 2015). Despite of numerous studies in recent years it is still not clear whether overweight or obesity could influence the PA of prepubertal children (Cain et al. 2013). According to the results of Riso et al. (2016), there were no differences in time spent in measured PA intensity levels between 7 and 9-years-old normal weight and overweight children. Another study with 10–12-year-old Estonian schoolchildren demonstrated that 26% of participants were overweight or obese and in contrast to younger children, the overweight group was significantly less physically active than normal weight group (Riso et al. 2018). In contrast, overweight primary school German children exceeded NW peers significantly in time spent in MVPA and also VPA levels (Kettner et al. 2013). However, most previous studies examining time spent in different PA intensity levels between normal weight and overweight children of similar age demonstrated lower level of PA among overweight than normal weight children (Laguna et al. 2013). Despite the fact that overweight children often spend shorter periods in PA levels at higher intensities than normal weight children, they frequently achieve similar amount of time at LPA level (Thompson et al. 2009). However, the positive impact of LPA on health indicators among children has still not been revealed. The findings of several studies show that LPA does not decrease the values of body adiposity indicators among 7–9-year-old children (Kwon et al. 2011; Thompson et al. 2009).

It has been discussed about which level of PA could have more effect to adiposity among children and youth. Basterfield et al. (2012) followed 403 UK children aged 7 years at baseline for two years and concluded that a decline in MVPA was associated with a greater increase in adiposity, whereas an increase in sedentary time was unrelated to an increase in adiposity. The associations were markedly stronger in boys compared with girls. Kwon et al. (2011) examined the associations between MVPA, sedentary time and body FM and found that MVPA was inversely associated with FM independent of sedentary time, whereas sedentary time was not associated with FM in mutually adjusted models. Gutin et al. (2002) found no difference in the effects of MPA compared with VPA on adiposity, but observed a greater effect of VPA on cardio-respiratory fitness. However, several studies found VPA to be correlated with body fatness even after controlling for age and gender (Steele et al. 2009; Mark and Janssen 2009). The results of Collings et al. (2016) indicated that MPA, and particularly VPA within a restricted time budget, may be the optimal intensity levels for improving adiposity and cardio-respiratory fitness levels in children.

It can be concluded that health benefits and desirable body composition can be achieved through higher doses of PA, achieved either through longer duration or higher intensity of PA or both.

### 21.3.2 Physical Activity and Physical Fitness in Children and Adolescents

Cross-sectional studies have shown that higher levels of PA and cardiorespiratory fitness are related to healthier metabolic profile in both children and adolescents (Dencker et al. 2008; McMurray et al. 2008; Ruiz et al. 2007), and have been suggested to decrease the risk of overweight and metabolic syndrome in adults (Andersen et al. 2004). Among non-communicable diseases, hypertension has been shown to have the highest prevalence in adults (Danaei et al. 2011), and studies have shown that blood pressure levels

in childhood and adolescence greatly impact the development of hypertension in adulthood (Lauer and Clarke 1989). PA and sedentary behaviours as factors that may influence blood pressure levels have been shown inverse and direct associations with blood pressure in children (Christofaro et al. 2013; Fröberg and Raustorp 2014). Children not meeting with the PA recommendations of 60 min MVPA daily are at high risk of developing high blood pressure. High blood pressure has been considered the risk factor with the highest attributable fractions for cardiovascular diseases mortality (40.6%) in adults (Go et al. 2013), and some studies have shown that when high BP is developed in childhood and adolescence, it could be crucial for developing cardiovascular disease such as stroke and myocardial infarction in adulthood (Lauer and Clarke 1989). Recently, it has been demonstrated that MPA, and particularly VPA within a restricted time budget, may be the optimal PA intensity domains for improving adiposity and cardiovascular fitness levels in children (Collings et al. 2016). Given data partially concur with those of others, who similarly found that MPA and VPA were both positively associated with cardiovascular fitness, but concluded that only VPA was associated with body fatness in children (Ruiz et al. 2006; Gutin et al. 2005). These results indicate that MPA, and particularly VPA may be the optimal PA intensity domains for improving cardiovascular fitness levels in children. Nevertheless, there are many biologically plausible arguments as to why PA intensity may be important for physical fitness and adiposity over and above energy expenditure, including appetite regulation and the lag-effect of increased post-activity resting metabolism (Collings et al. 2013). The association of cardiovascular fitness with different intensities of PA is less expressed than the association of adiposity in observational studies.

It can be concluded that although VPA would influence cardiovascular fitness the most, lower PA intensity can also produce significant improvement in cardiovascular fitness in children and adolescents.

### 21.3.3 Physical Activity and Functional Muscle-Bone Unit in Children and Adolescents

Physical fitness can be defined as the capacity to perform PA and is primarily determined by exercise training and genetics (Casazza et al. 2009). For most individuals, changes in the frequency, intensity, duration or type of PA will produce changes in physical fitness, although the amount of adaptation can vary considerably (Blair et al. 2001). Mechanical strain is an important factor in growth and modeling of skeletal system, therefore PA has been considered to be a determinant in the achievement of optimum peak bone mass, which reduce later fracture risk (Baxter-Jones et al. 2008). Mechanical loading factors, such as muscle forces and weight-bearing, make an additional contribution to bone formation and maintenance in children and adolescents (Baptista et al. 2012; Jürimäe 2010). Although the bone adaptive responses are affected by the amplitude, frequency, distribution, and duration of the bone loading, it is believed that maximum strain during VPA has the greatest influence on bone development (Ehrlich and Lanyon 2002). Unfortunately, there is a strong evidence to suggest that numerous children and adolescents worldwide fail in attaining an optimal high peak bone mass, which may have disastrous consequences and result in fragile bones and increased fracture risk not only during adolescence but also in adulthood (Rizzoli et al. 2010). The general agreement exists that the maximum accrual of bone mineral density (BMD) occurs in the years surrounding puberty (Jürimäe 2010; Heaney et al. 2000), and there is also evidence suggesting that osteoporosis and the risk of fractures may be reduced by maximizing the accrual of peak bone strength during childhood and adolescence (Sardinha et al. 2008). The effect of PA during growth and maturation depends on the ability of the skeleton to adapt to mechanical loading after exercise (Bielemann et al. 2013). However, it is not just the amount of PA that researchers have to

consider, but the intensity, frequency and the type of PA, due to the ground reaction forces applied at different skeletal sites. In addition, FFM independently of FM has been suggested as a strong predictor of bone adaptations during childhood and adolescence (Ivuskans et al. 2013; Gracia-Marco et al. 2012), with this being explained by the mechanostat theory 'bigger muscles exert higher tensile forces on the bones they attach'(Rauch et al. 2004). Increased bone mineral mass in response to PA in childhood may reduce the risk of osteoporotic fracture in later life, particularly if associated with improvements in bone geometry (Tobias et al. 2007). Therefore, the impact of PA during this period is important (Vaitkeviciute et al. 2016a, b; Ivuskans et al. 2015). Furthermore, PA has an important role in mediating the relationship between bone and adipose tissue and bone mineral parameters in early pubertal boys (Vaitkeviciute et al. 2016a, b). Ivuskans et al. (2015) investigated the relationship of PA level to bone mineral parameters in 11–13-year-old Estonian boys. Their results demonstrated that in overweight peripubertal boys, PA was more associated with bone mineral parameters compared to normal weight boys. In addition to VPA, already MPA had a significant impact on bone mineral parameters in overweight boys (Ivuskans et al. 2015). Furthermore, the increase in sedentary time emerged as one of the main predictors from PA variables to have the negative influence on bone mineral acquisition during one year observation period in 11–13-year-old boys (Ivuskans et al. 2015).

It can be concluded that the PA of higher intensity and weight bearing exercises could be strongly recommended for growing children to improve their bone quality and ensure the healthy bone parameters for adult life.

### 21.3.4 Physical Activity and Emotional Well-Being in Children and Adolescents

A definition of emotional wellbeing is offered by the Mental Health Foundation: 'A positive sense of wellbeing which enables an individual to be able to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life; people in good mental health have the ability to recover effectively from illness, change or misfortune'(www.mentalhealth.org.uk). The implications of decreased emotional well-being are related to mental health concerns such as stress, depression and anxiety both in children and adults. An association between PA and mental health in children and adolescents has been reported (Ahn and Fedewa 2011; Biddle and Asare 2011). A recent longitudinal study reported that adolescents who participate more frequently in PA are more resilient to developing depressive symptoms (McPhie and Rawana 2015). Participation in sports has also been found to be associated with reduced levels of depression and suicidal ideation (Babiss and Gangwisch 2009), and adolescents who take part in team sports have been found to report higher levels happiness than those who are engaged individual sports (Zhou et al. 2015). The findings of McMahon et al. (2016) relating to the benefits of sport participation and mental health benefits of PA may be partly accounted for by the social interaction achieved particularly in team sports, and thus confirm the importance of the psychological and social aspects of PA. Regular PA can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, all factors that can negatively influence school performance (Diamond 2015). Excessive sedentary time has detrimental effects on prosocial behaviours, such as spending time with family and friends and doing homework (Ramirez et al. 2011), and is also connected with mental health (Hume et al. 2011). Furthermore, sedentary time is also linked with poor self-esteem and depressive symptoms (Suchert et al. 2015). It is possible that adolescents with higher reported levels of depressive symptoms may choose to be less physically active and more engaged in isolated activities such as screen use (Kremer et al. 2014). Alternatively, having higher levels of sedentary behaviour may act to increase depressive symptoms (Kremer et al. 2014). Many cross-sectional studies have reported that depressed adolescents spend more time sedentary (Suchert et al. 2015).

Raudsepp (2016) investigated the bidirectional relationship between sedentary behaviour

and depressive symptoms among Estonian adolescent girls. The main findings of this study were that both sedentary behaviour and depressive symptoms increased over time and that initial sedentary behaviour and increase in sedentary behaviour were associated with initial level and increase in depressive symptoms. Therefore, a bidirectional relationship between sedentary behaviour and depressive symptoms in transition from early to mid-adolescence exists. Such findings encourage the development of interventions that attempt to reduce sedentary time as a method of decreasing depressive symptoms among adolescent girls (Raudsepp 2016).

It can be concluded that reducing sedentary time and increasing PA impact positively emotional well-being in addition to effect on physical health.

### 21.3.5  Physical Activity and Cognitive Development in Children and Adolescents

Physical activity has been shown to have many positive effects on the brain, with an even greater effect seen on developing brains in children (Cotman and Berchtold 2002). Research has shown that PA can affect the brain's physiology by increasing cerebral capillary growth, blood flow, oxygenation, production of neurotrophins, growth of nerve cells in the hippocampus (center of learning and memory), neurotransmitter levels, development of nerve connections, density of neural network and brain tissue volume (Cotman and Berchtold 2002).

It appears that the physical act of any movement has an actual effect on brain physiology. It is hypothesised that the neurophysiological changes which occur in the brain as a result of PA explain the positive influence that physical fitness has on academic performance (Cotman and Berchtold 2002). In fact, a 3-month exercise program can increase blood flow to brain memory and learning centers by up to 30% (Patoine 2007). As the importance of integration of PA and academic curriculum has been well understood, the new approach to teaching methods, especially in primary and basic school would be beneficial to work out.

It has to be taken into account that the opportunities for participation in sports teams and other modes of VPA may vary by many reasons as socio-economical status of student's family, logistical problems etc., but physical education classes at school are available almost uniformly. Active participation in physical education classes increases the chance to be more active and less sedentary beyond physical education among youth (Chen et al. 2014). This wide-ranging presence allows physical education to be uniquely positioned as an important public health tool and the importance of the subject of physical education should be emphasized. However, another area of need is the recognition of physical education as an important topic on the curriculum (Castillo et al. 2015). Historically, physical education tends to be marginalized in the hierarchy of school curricula compared with other academic subjects. Physical education cannot be viewed solely as recreation. The quality of teaching is also affected when nonspecialist teachers or appropriately trained individuals are given the task of leading physical education. Skill development and learning for life-long health habits need to be properly taught and evaluated (Diamond 2015).

It could be concluded that as physical education classes consist a notable and available possibility to increase the PA level of children and introduce the healthy lifestyle habits, the curricula of physical education should be more appreciated in educational institutions.

## 21.4  Conclusions

Physically active lifestyle and free play should be essential and enjoyable for growing and maturing children to ensure also their harmonic physical and mental development. Despite the fact that numerous benefits of PA to both mental and physical health of youth have been stated, a large number of children and adolescents still do not meet the current international daily recommendations of 60 min MVPA worldwide. According to

the studies assessing objectively the level of PA, it can be considered that sufficiently active children and adolescents form a minor proportion of their peers in many highly developed countries. Although it is often difficult to compare the results of different studies, while the methods used and study samples differ from each other, the proportion of compliant children is too small. In contemporary society, the need for active locomotion among both children and adults has been decreased significantly as compared with previous decades. Motorized transport and many possibilities to screen-based leisure time activity compete with active commuting and free play outside leading to spend the major part of the day sedentary. Although the adverse health effects of sedentary behaviour among children have yet not been confirmed as firmly as among adults, the urgent need exists to diminish the sedentary time in children and adolescents. Furthermore, the excessive screen use has found to cause reduction in sleep duration which affects negatively the health and behaviour of children. It is recommended that sedentary and LPA times should be in balance but LPA still compiles about two thirds of time spent inactive. Inactivity is considered to be one reason leading to excessive weight gain in children. Overweight and obesity of children and adolescents is an emerging health problem all over the world and overweight children tend to be overweight adults in future. Inactive lifestyle is not the only reason of excessive weight gain as the accessibility to energy-rich food is easier than ever in history and energy intake exceeds often energy expenditure. Although 60 min of daily MVPA has been considered to be the minimum daily amount of PA having impact on health indicators, the results of studies show that VPA has the most pronounced effect on healthy body composition and physical fitness and therefore should be emphasized. It has already been recommended that daily PA for children should reach 90 min of MVPA to express more beneficial health effects. The importance of MVPA could not be overstated but replacement of preferably mores sedentary activities with LPA should reduce the adverse effects of longlasting sedentary time. To fight the growing number of children who suffer from the adverse effects of inactivity and excessive sedentary time – overweight, depression, anxiety, decreased physical fitness – special interventions for educational institutions should be worked out to introduce healthy PA patterns. School-based interventions are accessible for all children regardless of their socio-economical position and may increase the physically active time during school day. As a participation in organized sports is not available for all children, more attention should be payed to the number PE lessons and curricula of this subject. But physical education classes at school are available almost uniformly. Active participation in physical education classes increases the chance to be more active and less sedentary beyond physical education among youth. Reorganizing the school environment to be more friendly for moving may add valuable minutes of PA to a child's day. A number of studies reveal that the PA of children decreases significantly during puberty. The habits of health behaviour achieved in later childhood track often into adulthood and thus it is important to introduce the healthy lifestyle and PA in school years.

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# Moving Physical Activity Research: From Quality of Life to Positive Psychological Functioning in Individuals Living with Osteoporosis

**22**

Diane E. Mack, Philip M. Wilson, and Katie E. Gunnell

## Abstract

Increased interest in the promotion of well-being has presented new opportunities for health researchers to investigate factors that enhance (or diminish) this optimal functional state. Physical activity has been advanced as one lifestyle behavior linked with increased well-being (Biddle SJH, Murtie N, Psychology of physical activity: determinants, well-being and interventions, 2nd edn. Routledge, London, 2008). Closer inspection of this literature, however, suggests that the relationship may be more complex than is portrayed. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the physical activity – well-being literature with evidence attesting to this relationship in individuals living with osteoporosis. In this overview, historical approaches linked to quality of life which have dominated the literature will first be documented. Evidence will then be extended to more contemporary approaches of well-being–namely those linked with feeling good and positive psychological functioning. A second focus will be recommendations for health researchers which address the specific limitations and gaps currently noted in the literature expressly designed to examine this relationship. Issues spanning conceptual problems, measurement issues and insight into mechanisms theorized to promote well-being are advanced and discussed. Given the importance of well-being outcomes, researchers are encouraged to adopt these recommendations in an effort to advance our understanding of well-being as it pertains to physical activity in individuals living with osteoporosis.

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Scientists have elucidated the benefits of physical activity on diverse health outcomes (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes; Bouchard et al. 2012; Clow and Edmunds 2014). Without effective knowledge translation, however, this information may be of minimal benefit to the general public. In an attempt to educate the general public about the benefits of physical activity, evidence

informed physical activity guidelines (PAGs) that describe the mode of physical activity (e.g., aerobic activities, resistance training), its frequency, duration and intensity that is needed to gain health benefits have been disseminated. It is to this end that PAGs have been developed by various organizations (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP), 2011a, b; Centres for Disease Control and Prevention 2008; UK Department of Health 2011) with the purpose of encouraging physical activity for health benefits.

Recognizing the unique needs of individuals across the lifespan, PAGs have been tailored to different age cohorts including older adults (e.g., CSEP 2011a, b) and for those living with specific health conditions (e.g., spinal cord injury; SCI Action Canada 2011). Most recently, Giangregorio et al. (2014) published evidence informed exercise recommendations for individuals living with osteoporosis or vertebral fractures stemming from osteoporosis. On the basis of their review, Giangregorio et al. (2014) recommended a multicomponent exercise program including resistance and balance training for individuals with osteoporosis or osteoporotic vertebral fractures. Aerobic activities on their own were not recommended. For those who have experienced an osteoporotic vertebral fracture, it was also recommended that exercise should be undertaken following consultation with a physical therapist. These general recommendations preceded more specific information that detailed the mode, frequency, duration, and intensity of exercise for individuals living with osteoporosis that were largely guided by PAGs for older adults (Giangregorio et al. 2015). On the basis of their review, Giangregorio et al. (2014) offered moderate support for the role of physical activity on one meaningful outcome for those living with osteoporosis–namely the prevention of falls.

## 22.1 Physical Activity and Well-being

Messages that accompany PAGs do not usually identify improvements in well-being as a clinical outcome. The lack of attention given to well-being in PAG's could stem from the assumption that it is an implied or commonly known consequence of improvements in physical health. Alternatively, it is possible that the quality of the scientific evidence may not be strong enough to endorse such a recommendation (e.g., Giangregorio et al. 2014; Warburton et al. 2007). The quality of evidence that informs PAGs and their outcomes can vary considerably based on the level of confidence placed in the science which underpins the guidelines (Guyatt et al. 2008). A recommendation of "high" is advanced when there is confidence in the estimates of effect such that future research is unlikely to change the estimate of an interventions' effect. A "very low" recommendation is advanced when the estimates of effect for any intervention is very uncertain.

Whether physical activity is associated with benefits in well-being in individuals living with osteoporosis has been the focus of a number of reviews in recent years (see Table 22.1; Caputo and Zanusso Costa 2014; Giangregorio et al. 2013; Giangregorio et al. 2014; Li et al. 2009; Mack et al. 2017; Wilhelm et al. 2012). On the basis of these reviews the link between physical activity and well-being in individuals living with osteoporosis seems inconclusive with some researchers offering general support for its beneficial effects (Caputo and Zanusso Costa 2014; Mack et al. 2017; Wilhelm et al. 2012) whereas others are more cautious (Giangregorio et al. 2014; Li et al. 2009). Discrepancies between the conclusions of researchers conducting systematic reviews may stem from differences in inclusion/exclusion criteria or the indicators of well-being examined (see Mack et al. 2017 for details). Collectively, these results suggest that the PA – well-being relationship may be more complex than is often portrayed in the literature and therefore warrants greater attention.

While research designed to bring added clarity to the physical activity – well-being relationship in individuals living with osteoporosis has been advocated for, it should be conducted with one caveat: That researchers design and implement studies that are purposefully conducted to contribute to the quality of evidence (Guyatt et al. 2008). Researchers are encouraged to

**Table 22.1** Overview of review articles linking physical activity to well-being in individuals living with osteoporosis

| Inclusion Criteria | Number of Studies Included | Conclusions |
|---|---|---|
| Caputo and Zanusso Coasta (2014) | | |
| Longitudinal studies in postmenopausal women with osteoporosis or with a clinical diagnosis of osteoporosis in the femoral neck or lumbar spine and no history of atraumatic fracture. Studies written in either English or Portuguese | *Condition-specific or generic quality of life instruments in individuals living with osteoporosis:* 10 | Exercise demonstrated a positive effect on quality of life. Primary studies included in this review demonstrated improvements in composite scores and across the following domains: General health, social interaction, body image, activities of daily living, vitality, social function, and mental health. Stronger evidence for the beneficial effects of physical activity on physical domains of quality of life |
| Giangregorio et al. (2013) | | |
| Randomized controlled trials and quasi-randomized trials comparing exercise or active physical therapy interventions with no exercise/physical therapy controls in individuals living with a history of vertebral fracture. Multiple outcomes including quality of life examined | *Self-reported physical function:* 5 *Condition-specific or generic quality of life instruments:* 4 | *Physical Function:* No definitive conclusions advanced. *Quality of Life:* Pooled data not analyzed because of the small sample size and study heterogeneity. No definitive conclusions advanced |
| Giangregorio et al. (2014) | | |
| Comprehensive review of existing literature examining exercise and physical activity across two cohorts: (1) older adults with a diagnosis of osteoporosis but no fracture history and (2) older adults with a history of osteoporotic vertebral fracture. Multiple outcomes including quality of life examined | *Condition-specific or generic quality of life instruments in individuals living with osteoporosis but no fracture history:* 0 *Condition-specific or generic quality of life instruments in individuals living with a history of osteoporotic vertebral fractures:* 3 | *Quality of Life for individuals living with osteoporosis but no fracture history:* Not applicable *Quality of Life for individuals living with osteoporosis and a history of vertebral fractures:* No definitive conclusions advanced. Quality rating "very low" |
| Li et al. (2009) | | |
| Randomized controlled trials on postmenopausal women with a clinical diagnosis of osteoporosis or osteopenia with or without fractures. Physical activity was compared with standard therapies (usual activities or control) were included. Primary outcome of interest was quality of life as assessed via self-report instruments | *Condition-specific or generic quality of life instruments in individuals diagnoses with either osteoporosis or osteopenia:* 4 | Physical activity was linked to significant ($p < 0.05$) improvements in quality of life across the following domains: Physical functioning, pain, role physical, and vitality. Non-statistically significant improvements were noted across the following domains: General health, social role mental health, and emotion role. Length of intervention demonstrated differential effects of select domains of quality of life |

(continued)

**Table 22.1** (continued)

| Inclusion Criteria | Number of Studies Included | Conclusions |
|---|---|---|
| Mack et al. (2017) | | |
| No design restrictions. Studies were excluded if they (1) included any person other than individuals living with osteoporosis (e.g., osteopenia); (2) osteoporosis was secondary to another health condition; (3) measured physical or functional fitness; (4) physical activity was part of a multi-component intervention and; (5) data was quantitative | *Well-being or quality of life (generic or condition specific) instruments in individuals living with osteoporosis:* 17 | Physical activity linked to well-being or quality of life outcomes. Stronger evidence for the beneficial effects of physical activity on physical domains of quality of life |
| Wilhelm et al. (2012) | | |
| Randomized controlled trial individuals living with osteoporosis or osteopenia. Mode of physical activity was resistance training as an intervention. Primary outcome of interest were the domains of physical functioning or activities of daily living assessed via self-report instruments | *Self-reported physical function of activities of daily living in individuals diagnoses with either osteoporosis or osteopenia:* 5 | Interventions using resistance training have a beneficial impact on the domains of physical functioning and activities of daily living. Effect sizes ranged from 0.08–1.74 from primary studies included in the review |

extend their research beyond what has typically been examined in an effort to break through the 'noise' that pervades this literature. The focus of this chapter is designed to offer considerations for researchers to ponder with the intent of advancing better research examining the physical activity-well-being link in individuals living with osteoporosis to inform practitioners and researchers in developing PAGs.

## 22.2 Conceptual Considerations: How Broad (or Narrow) Is the Spectrum of Well-Being?

Although a widely used concept in the psychological sciences, well-being has proven difficult to define (Galloway et al. 2006; Michalos et al. 2011). Broadly, well-being has been conceptualized as the quality and state of a person's life (Maggino 2015), others have called for a more nuanced approach which differentiates key components (e.g., quality of life, functioning, etc.; Dodge et al. 2012; Guerin 2012). Clarity around the definition of well-being can be advanced with an understanding of what different terms linked to well-being are intended to capture.

Quality of life is a broad term used to capture the degree to which a person's life is desirable versus undesirable with the emphasis on objective measures such as personal safety, friendship, financial security, and health (Diener 2005). Following the publication of research on quality of life, researchers became interested in more subjective perceptions of how satisfied people feel about themselves–notably their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to life circumstances. To address these issues, the term health-related quality of life (HRQoL) has been advanced to include life circumstances that are affected by condition diagnosis and subsequent treatment. Essential elements for any instrument tapping into HRQoL include: physical, psychological/mental, and social health as well as global perceptions of functioning and well-being (Campbell et al. 1976). Despite the evidence-base supporting the physical activity-well-being relationship in indi-

viduals living with osteoporosis, one domain–namely physical functioning–has somewhat consistently been linked to well-being outcomes when contrasted against other domains of HRQoL (Caputo and Zanusso Costa 2014; Li et al. 2009). This finding is not surprising given that physical functioning taps into aspects that are more directly linked to physical activity including perceptions of one's abilities to engage in activities without limitations due to factors such as health, pain, or other comorbidities.

Huppert and So (2013) suggested that instruments designed to assess HRQoL may be of limited utility to describe positive aspects of well-being given their focus on physical functioning, limitations, and negative feelings. For example, the four-item emotional functioning subscale of the Osteoporosis Quality of Life Questionnaire (Cook et al. 1993) asks individuals to rate the extent to which they experience only negative emotions (i.e., afraid of fractures, afraid of falling, angry and frustrated). Extending beyond HRQoL, contemporary views link well-being with optimal functioning (Ryan and Deci 2001) with more transient hedonic (i.e., affective experiences, satisfaction) and more enduring eudaimonic (i.e., purpose, meaning, etc.) traditions comprising essential components of well-being (McMahan and Estes 2011). To this end, Huppert and So (2013) identified two core factors of well-being. The first, labelled psychological characteristics, includes the dimensions of emotional stability, vitality, optimism, resilience, positive emotions, and self-esteem. The second factor, psychological functioning, is comprised of engagement, competence, meaning, and positive relationships. Consideration of the above characteristics is consistent with the more contemporary approaches to understanding well-being conceptualized as "a dynamic and relative state where one maximizes his or her physical, mental, and social functioning in the context of supportive environments to live a full, satisfying, and productive life" (Kobau et al. 2010; p. 274).

That well-being extends beyond consideration of HRQoL is not a novel idea. Yet it is clear that there is resistance to recognize the importance of

psychological characteristics and psychological functioning. Windle (2014) identified one major limitation of physical activity research on older adults is the limited focus on positive functioning (i.e., well-being). The same is true when it comes to examining the association between physical activity on well-being outcomes in individuals living with osteoporosis. With notable exceptions (Gunnell et al. 2011; Raastad et al. 2015), most researchers investigating have focused on symptom reduction consistent with HRQoL and outcome measures that rarely include assessments of positive feelings or positive functioning. As such, there is a need to examine how physical activity is linked with well-being (above and beyond HRQoL) to determine the influence of physical activity on this important clinical outcome for persons living with osteoporosis.

## 22.3 Study Design

Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) when appropriately designed are considered the 'gold standard' for establishing cause and effect between an intervention and an outcome. All too often randomization of participants to conditions is the primary criteria linked to RCTs. Randomization offers the best method for balancing known and unknown confounds between groups which is linked to higher internal validity. RCTs, however, can result in biased results if they lack other known characteristics linked to methodological rigour (e.g., blinding, reporting of adverse events; Jüni et al. 2001; Schulz et al. 1995). Conclusions from select reviews on individuals living with osteoporosis were limited to studies using RCTs (Li et al. 2009; Wilhelm et al. 2012). In an effort to improve reporting practices of RCTs the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT and CONSORT PRO) was developed (Calvert et al. 2013; Schulz et al. 2010a, b). This 25 item checklist addresses what authors should include in any manuscript submitted for publication. Calvert et al. (2013) extended these guidelines to include additional considerations for RCTS examining patient-reported outcomes

such as well-being (CONSORT PRO). As a consequence, CONSORT and CONSORT PRO may indirectly influence how study authors design and conduct their RCTs as methodological deficiencies will be identified in the review process. As such, CONSORT and CONSORT PRO can help researchers in designing their interventions to assess the link between physical activity and well-being among individuals living with osteoporosis resulting in a higher quality of evidence.

But how should researchers who choose not to test their research question through the use of RCT's proceed? For example, ethical concerns linked to withholding treatment from individuals with osteoporosis to fulfill scientific objectives may guide study design away from the use of RCTs (Resnick 2008). Similarly, randomization may not be feasible in certain settings (e.g., community based programming) or when researchers are comparing different modes of physical activity as the primary research question. Some researchers have advocated for the adoption of the large simple trial (Beedie et al. 2016) as a balance between the trade-off of validity and generalization often linked to the decision to adopt RCTs or observational studies. Regardless of study design, researchers are encouraged to refer to CONSORT reporting guidelines. Guidelines for transparency in reporting research that should be examined to inform study design have been developed for research designs that are not RCTs such as observational studies and qualitative research (Equator Network 2016).

## 22.4 Proliferation of Well-Being Instruments: Lack of Rationale

A lack of thorough justification when selecting suitable well-being instruments to test the research question could hamper research efforts. In their recent review, Linton et al. (2016) unearthed 99 instruments that tapped into global (as opposed to condition specific) well-being for use in adults. The proliferation of instruments available for adoption by researchers was rein-

forced by Mack et al. (2017) who found that 11 different instruments were used across 17 studies examining the physical activity – well-being literature in individuals living with osteoporosis.

The overarching consideration researchers much consider when selecting a well-being instrument is the intended purpose of the study. Study design combined with the rigorous execution of procedures cannot make up for a poorly chosen instrument. The instrument of choice should have a solid theoretical basis and contain the well-being domains expected to be influenced by physical activity. For example, a home-based physical activity program for individuals living with osteoporosis may be directly linked with changes in select dimensions of well-being (e.g., competence, vitality) but not others (e.g., social relationships). Hyland (2003) further proposed a 2 × 2 framework to guide instrument selection depending on whether the study purpose is longitudinal versus cross-sectional and to be used for research versus clinical purposes. Considerations for test length, response options, variability in participant scores, and sensitivity were identified as guiding principles. It is further recommended that any instrument chosen contain items that are appropriate for the unique characteristics of the cohort (i.e., osteoporosis) to ensure that scores germane to this sample are imbued with meaning. Mack et al. (2017) exemplified the importance of selecting well-being instruments that were relevant to condition diagnosis as they demonstrated a greater proportion of studies adopting condition specific (as opposed to generic) instruments demonstrated a beneficial link between physical activity and well-being in individuals living with osteoporosis.

## 22.5 The Whole or the Sum of the Parts: The Use of Composite or Domain Scores

Many instruments designed to measure well-being can be analyzed as a composite score (i.e., combining all subscales into one score) and/or across individual domains (i.e., individual subscales or domains scores). For example, the commonly used Quality of Life Questionnaire of the European Foundation for Osteoporosis (QUALEFFO-41; Lips et al. 1999) is comprised of five HRQoL domains assessed by 41 items. These domains are: General Health, Mental Function, Pain, Physical Function, and Social Function. Scores on this scale have been interpreted both as composite quality of life score and across individual domains in the literature examining the link between physical activity and well-being in individuals living with osteoporosis (Bennell et al. 2010; Tüzün et al. 2010). The use of composite and domain specific scores have advantages and disadvantages that vary depending on research objectives and researcher constraints (Michalos et al. 2011). For example, composite scores of well-being could mask the relationship between physical activity and well-being as changes in some dimensions (e.g., vitality) may be masked by little or no changes in others (e.g., emotional functioning). Therefore, it is possible that the decision to use a composite score may not detect changes in specific domains targeted by the intervention. Or, that the use of composite scores may capture areas of well-being that are not targeted by the intervention, and therefore any change is likely due to natural variation or error.

The choice to use composite versus domain scores can compromise the validity of the study, produce misleading results, and has implications for one's ability to compare study findings with those of others (i.e., external validity). Researchers are encouraged to consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of adopting composite or domain specific indicators when analyzing and reporting their data.

## 22.6 Responsiveness of Instrument Scores

The responsiveness (the ability to detect clinically important change) of the scores produced from the instrument is an important consideration

in longitudinal research (Hyland 2003). Guyatt et al. (1987) have advocated that responsiveness should be considered alongside reliability and validity as necessary requirements for instruments designed primarily to measure change over time. Whether an instrument is responsive to change depends on varied factors including its content (i.e., global versus condition-specific), the validity of the test scores, the error associated with scores, floor/ceiling effects (i.e., more than 15% of participants record the highest or lowest response option; McHorney and Tarlov 1995), response format, item relevance, and the ability of an intervention to create change. Attention to the responsiveness of any well-being instrument to detect change as a consequence of physical activity engagement has not been clearly advanced for individuals living with osteoporosis.

Consideration of responsiveness can be calculated at either the group or individual levels of analysis (Beaton et al. 2001; Maheswaran et al. 2012). At the group level of analyses, researchers examine the average amount of change for a group (e.g., means, standard deviations, change scores). At the individual level, estimates can help interpret individual's responsiveness to an intervention that group-level indexes cannot. To assess responsiveness, researchers can use a distribution-based or anchor-based approaches (Streiner et al. 2015). In distribution-based approaches, responsiveness is imparted to test scores by a statistically significant change in participant scores and their associated variability (i.e., standard deviation). Common distribution-based estimates include effect sizes and the standard error of measurement (Crosby et al. 2004). When using this approach, responsiveness is dependent on variability and a 'statistically significant' change may not equate to a clinically important change (or vice-versa). For researchers adopting anchor-based approaches, changes in well-being scores are compared to other clinically meaningfully markers. When using an anchor-based approach, caution is noted as the marker selected must be a valid indicator of clinical change.

## 22.7 When Does Well-Being Change as a Consequence of Physical Activity?

Researchers with interest in the physical activity – well-being relationship in individuals living with osteoporosis have typically answered their research questions through the use of cross-sectional (Basaran et al. 2007; Gunnell et al. 2011) or quasi−/randomized experimental designs whereby well-being was assessed pre- and post-intervention (Bennell et al. 2010; Carter et al. 2002). When using a cross-sectional design researchers examine variability in physical activity and well-being at a single point in time. Whereas the adoption of quasi−/randomized experimental designs permits researchers the ability to assume a linear relationship between physical activity and well-being across more than one point in time. In their review of the literature, Li et al. (2009) identified that short duration studies (i.e., ≤ 12 weeks) were associated with different well-being outcomes than were those that were longer in duration (i.e., > 12 weeks). In contrast, Giangregorio et al. (2013) compared differences in well-being outcomes when assessed between four and 12 weeks, 16–24 weeks and after 52 weeks and found no clear pattern emerging.

No clear recommendations have been advanced pertinent to the dose or length of physical activity interventions (e.g., 12 weeks, 24 weeks, 52 weeks) associated with changes in well-being. As such, the cut-points adopted by Giangregorio and colleagues (Giangregorio et al. 2013) and Li et al. (2009) were likely arbitrary. Developing an understanding of dose may serve as one avenue to explore as the length of any intervention that may translate into improvements in select health markers (e.g., falls, balance) in individuals living with osteoporosis may differ from that for well-being. For greater insight into the dynamic nature of the physical activity – well-being relationship researchers are encouraged to conduct multi-wave designs to avoid missing meaningful changes in well-being as a function of timing of test administrations.

Through the adoption of multiple test administrations greater insight can be gained into (1) when meaningful changes occur, (2) across what domains of well-being change initially occurs (e.g., physical functioning) and which are slower to respond (e.g., vitality) and (3) when enduring improvements in well-being will be maintained over time.

Extending beyond these traditionally adopted approaches, researchers are encouraged to consider the benefits of diary methods for examining the physical activity – well-being relationship. Diary approaches can include ecological momentary assessment or day reconstruction methods (Schneider and Stone 2016) and provide researchers with the ability to capture variability and dynamic changes that result as a consequence of physical activity. Further, Ekkekakis et al. (2008) have demonstrated how affective responses change over the course of a single bout of exercise. Considerations of multiple assessments of well-being across a single bout of exercise offers researchers increased understanding of the experiences of individuals living with osteoporosis during the course of an exercise session. Finally, collecting insight directly from individuals engaged in physical activity through qualitative approaches has recently been advocated as one overlooked yet complementary method (McLeod et al. 2011).

## 22.8   Report on Process…Not Just the Outcome

With select exceptions (Bennell et al. 2010; Carter et al. 2002), researchers have rarely documented information linked to process evaluation when examining the physical activity – well-being relationship in individuals living with osteoporosis. Process evaluation includes the systematic documentation as to how those delivering the intervention were trained; what resources were provided to facilitate the delivery of the intervention; an assessment of intervention fidelity, dose (i.e., the quality of the intervention implemented) and; strategies identifying how to

adapt to participant needs. Process evaluation is beneficial when interpreting study outcomes and is essential when building an evidence base to inform practice. As such, researchers are encouraged to include aspects of process evaluation in their intervention-based research. To facilitate this line of inquiry, Moore et al. (2015) developed a framework to guide principles linked to carrying out process evaluation with context, implementation and mechanisms of change highlighted.

Understanding the context is critical for the generalizability of study findings as it reflects variables external to the intervention that may act as facilitators or barriers. Consideration of context can include setting features such as location (physical therapy clinic, home), but can also extend to specific situational variables such as participants degree of autonomy, resources, density of the exercise group, and physical comfort (e.g., temperature). It should be understood that an intervention may have different effects in different contexts even if its implementation does not vary.

Implementation addresses how delivery is achieved and includes intervention fidelity, reach, adaptations, and adoption (Steckler and Linnan 2002). Common implementation considerations are adherence/compliance of participants, exposure, participant responsiveness, fidelity/deviation to program delivery by exercise instructors, and exercise instructor training. Assessing how all of these influence the effectiveness of an intervention is a key function of process evaluation. Evaluating implementation can provide many benefits such as appraising internal validity, enabling replication, and conducting dose-response analyses.

To facilitate understanding into how physical activity imparts changes in well-being among individuals living with osteoporosis consideration of mechanisms of change is important. Understanding such mechanisms may also identify how these effects might be replicated. The selection of relevant mechanisms of change can be facilitated by using Michie et al. (2013) taxonomy of behavior change techniques or through

evaluating the association between theoretically grounded variables. These approaches to supporting how physical activity is linked to well-being is generally absent from intervention research on individuals with osteoporosis (Mack et al. 2017) with select exceptions. In two such notable exceptions, Gunnell et al. (2011) examined the role of fulfilling key psychological needs during PA as a mediator, whereas changes in autonomous motivation for exercise and perceived competence as a consequence of physical activity engagement have also been noted (Raastad et al. 2015).

## 22.9 Measurement and Conceptualization of Physical Activity

Conclusions attesting to the benefits of physical activity on well-being in individuals living with osteoporosis are further complicated when considering the heterogeneity of physical activity in terms of mode, frequency, duration, intensity, and the length of the intervention. For example, Hongo et al. (2007) prescribed a simple mild intensity back exercise lasting 3–5 min conducted 5 days per week. Well-being was assessed at the beginning and end of the 16 week intervention. Conversely, Küçükçakır and Korkmaz (2013) had participants engage in a 60 minute multi-component Pilates exercise 2 times a week over the course of a year. Authors of other reviews (e.g., Netz et al. 2005; Windle 2014) have offered similar conclusions, however, identifying the optimal dose of exercise in terms of frequency, intensity, and duration is crucial for developing effective interventions and subsequent PAGs (Schuch et al. 2016). This heterogeneity renders understanding the link between PA and meaningful outcomes such as well-being problematic and convoluted. As such, three recommendations are advanced for researcher consideration in an attempt to consolidate the conceptualization of physical activity across studies.

First, adopting PAGs suggested by Giangregorio et al. (2014, 2015), or those consis-tent with public health guidelines for older adults, serve as evidence-informed launching points when designing interventions or recommending physical activity for individuals living with osteoporosis. Caution is noted however as these recommendations offer no insight into the length of intervention delivery to test study objectives. A secondary note of caution can be identified as improvements in well-being as a consequence of physical activity may not be synonymous with those linked to reductions in fractures (or fragility risk) as per Giangregorio et al. (2014). As Netz et al. (2005) found that aerobic activity was linked with improvements in well-being in older adults similar effects may generalize to individuals living with osteoporosis. Giangregorio et al. (2014) did not recommend aerobic activity as the sole modality of exercise based on their review of the literature. Therefore, researchers are strongly encouraged to consider the evidence-base linked to physical activity modality on their outcome of interest.

Second, Wilson et al. (2010)) noted that structured exercise was less frequently engaged in when compared to physical activity in individuals living with osteoporosis. Notably, walking was the most commonly endorsed mode of physical activity as approximately 60% of respondents indicated they had adopted this mode of activity over the past 3 months. This is in stark contrast to more structured activities in the form of exercise classes or weight training (7.70% and 3.10% respectively). Given this, in tandem with the low prevalence rates of people with osteoporosis meeting PAGs (Gunnell et al. 2012), the focus of research attention may need to centre on encouraging individuals to become more active by engaging in a mode of physical activity they are already doing, that is more convenient, or enjoyable. Researchers have demonstrated the promise of physical activity on well-being in this cohort (Basaran et al. 2007; Gunnell et al. 2011). Through an increased understanding of what types of physical activity promote well-being combined with an investigations into the dose-response relationship, health promoters can look at designing a physical activity programme that

not only reduces the risk of fragility fractures, but also promotes well-being in individuals living with osteoporosis.

Finally, aligned with CONSORT guidelines, recommendations for how to report interventions have been advanced in the literature (Hoffmann et al. 2014; Schulz et al. 2010). These recommendations for reporting should be used when designing physical activity interventions on well-being outcomes. It is with the clear reporting of key intervention characteristics such as duration, dose, mode of delivery and other essential processes that play a role in the efficacy and replicability of research.

## 22.10  Concluding Remarks

It is clear that there is a lack of consensus attesting to whether physical activity is linked to well-being outcomes in individuals living with osteoporosis. Implications emanating from this line of inquiry has rendered translating research into PAGs for use by individuals problematic. Numerous recommendations for researchers interested in the physical activity – well-being relationships were advanced. Researchers are encouraged to justify their selection of well-being instrument as aligned with the over-arching study purpose. Analytic decisions made including the responsiveness of scores of well-being instruments as a consequence of physical activity have been long overlooked. Finally, it is no longer sufficient to report only an intervention's primary outcomes, it is also necessary to report its intermediary effects (e.g., process evaluation). More studies that include process evaluation are needed to improve our understanding of how long-term change in well-being can best be achieved. Given the importance of well-being outcomes, researchers are encouraged to adopt these recommendations in an effort to advance the literature on this important topic for allied medical professionals and health promoters and, ultimately, the well-being of individuals living with osteoporosis.

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# Predictors of Physical Activity and Sports and Their Influence on the Wellbeing of Adolescents

**23**

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**Abstract**

The present study aimed to assess whether contextual influences on practice of physical activity and sports among adolescents – as it is the case of practice of sports by important people in their lives, encouragement to playing sports from important people in their lives, the importance of and reasons for playing sports among adolescents, and their intention to play sports in the future – predict psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction in this population, and whether effective practice of physical activity and sports by adolescents work as a mediating variable in these relations. This study involved 3.396 school-aged adolescents from Southern Brazil. The instruments adopted were: the block on physical activity and practice of sports of The Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey; the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), for psychological wellbeing assessment; and the Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS). The results, obtained by means of hierarchical linear regression analysis, confirmed the hypotheses that effective practice of physical activity and sports by adolescents operates as a mediator between the influences on practice of physical activity/sports among adolescents, psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. These results show that, with respect to practice of physical activity/sports in adolescence, contextual influences are important for psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. However, effective practice of physical activity/sports should be encouraged and implemented in a variety of possible contexts in the life of adolescents as a strategy towards the promotion of this population's quality of life.

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## 23.1 Introduction

Adolescence is a critical phase to the formation of individuals for being a period of physical, psychological and social instability (Fortes et al. 2012; Siervogel et al. 2004). This stage, experienced between 10 and 19 years of age (Fortes and Ferreira 2011; Santos et al. 2011), is characterized by biopsychosocial transformations, with external stimuli and internal body changes. In this phase, young individuals need family and social conditions that favor a healthy process of transition to adult life (Costa and Machado 2014).

Children and adolescents are likely to gain a high body mass index (BMI), which may evolve to overweight or obesity with age (Guo and Chumlea 1999). Thus, regular practice of physical activity (PA) is of extreme importance for the health of adolescents (USDHHS 2008), since it improves bone mineral density, cardiovascular health, aerobic fitness, resistance and muscle strength, and emotional health (Strong et al. 2005). It is a fundamental component for the development of healthy lifestyles that, along with nutrition, helps adolescents stay healthy, prevents bone disorders, promotes aerobic resistance (Lima et al. 2001). Due to its benefits, the World Health Organization advises that all children, adolescents and young adults do at least 60 min/day of PA of moderate to vigorous intensity (WHO 2010). When practiced in childhood and adolescence, physical activity and sports can be important lifestyle predictors in adults (Tammelin et al. 2003). Even so, this practice decreases with age (Pate et al. 2002; Telama and Yang 2000).

Adolescents are influenced by various everyday situations; exercising and playing sports can be a favorable factor for health-promoting attitudes as they enable ludic experiences that can have a positive impact on attitudes adopted by youths. A healthy lifestyle is related to a better quality of life and greater sensation of wellbeing (Richardson et al. 2005) and is influenced by social and family relations, as well as by the environment where people live (Barr-Anderson et al. 2007). Studies show that physical exercise can generate physiological, psychological and cognitive benefits (Moreno et al. 2008; Strüder and Weicker 2001), impacting positively the performance of complex tasks (Weingarten 1973).

However, family can present some barriers that hinder this practice too, for example safety matters – since physical activities and sports are practiced mainly in public places and on the streets –, high costs and poor access to existing facilities (Allender et al. 2006; Duncan et al. 2005). Parents' concern with the safety of their children may prevent the latter from engaging in outdoor activities and stimulate them to do more sedentary activities, such as TV or computer (Gunner et al. 2005).

There are few studies showing association between practice of physical activity and sports and influences from parents. A research evidences association between PA in the leisure time of parents and adolescents, with influence from fathers being greater when compared to that from mothers. Nevertheless, it also observed that female adolescents exercised more during their leisure time when their mothers did so too. This study showed that 79.3% of the youths whose both parents were active exercised in their free time as well (Loch et al. 2015). Another study revealed significant association between mothers and children that practiced light to moderate physical activity, while mothers who did not practice any PA had children that did not exercise either (Felix et al. 2010), which shows how mothers influence their children's exercise habits. As for fathers, that very same study showed that running, walking or riding a bicycle were activities that positively associated with their children's exercise habits, revealing that all adolescents that engaged in this practice had fathers that did it too (Félix et al. 2010), with those being their children's favorite activity. There are multiple factors that influence young individuals when it comes to PA and this influence manifests in different ways, such as logistics, in the case of parents bringing their children to adequate places, stimulating them and being financially responsible for this practice (Raudsepp 2006). It seems that a parent's example and his or her encouragement facilitate the practice of PA in adolescence (Fernandes et al. 2011).

Life satisfaction is a subjective wellbeing component, process through which individuals globally assess the quality of their lives based on their own criteria (Diener 2000), being an important indicator for them to assess their quality of life. Adolescents are prone to acquiring healthy habits at the same time they are exposed to a number of situations of risk. In this phase, regular practice of physical activity can be installed as a lifestyle and result in higher levels of life satisfaction. Those who play sports also have higher levels of life satisfaction. The more intense and structured this practice is, the higher these levels will be (Moraes et al. 2009). Thus, physical

activity can play a fundamental role in the physical, psychological and mental aspects of adolescents, improving self-esteem, social acceptance and sensation of wellbeing (Bois et al. 2005; Hohepa et al. 2006) and reducing anxiety, stress and depression levels (Hallal et al. 2006).

A study observed that adolescents listed five themes as beneficial effects from the practice of physical activity: (a) joy, resulting from socialization with peers; (b) accomplishment, personal development and social recognition; (c) physical benefits; (d) psychological benefits, with improvements in mood and self-confidence; (e) perception that physical activity is the best option available (Hohepa et al. 2006).

Any amount of physical activity acts as a protection against depression symptoms (Seabra et al. 2008). Social influences, from teachers, siblings, parents, play a vital role in physical activities levels during adolescence and help form positive attitudes in relation to exercises, being an important step towards effective practice (Azar et al. 2008). Both family and friends are essential sources of encouragement to physical activities and operate as a support to the social integration of these youths, providing stimulation, moral support and positive information regarding exercises.

From this perspective, the present study is based on the model displayed in Fig. 23.1, according to which effective practice of physical activity/sports play a mediating role in the relationship between influences on the practice of physical activity and sports, psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction.

For such a purpose, the following hypotheses were approached:

H1: Effective practice of physical activity/sports play a moderating role in the association between practice of sports by important people in the life of adolescents, encouragement to playing sports from important people in the life of adolescents, intention to play sports in the future, importance given to reasons for playing sports by adolescents, and psychological wellbeing among school-aged adolescents

H2: Effective practice of physical activity/sports plays a moderating role in the association between practice of sports by important people in the life of adolescents, encouragement to playing sports from important people in the life of adolescents, intention to play sports in the future, importance given to reasons for

**Fig. 23.1** Graphic representation of the mediating role played by effective practice of physical activities/sports between influences on practice of physical activity and sports, psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction
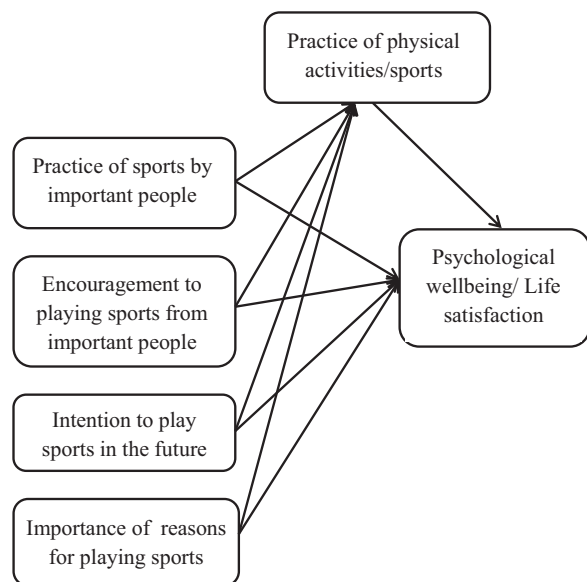
playing sports by adolescents, and life satisfaction among school-aged adolescents

According to the hypotheses presented, this study aimed to assess whether contextual influences on practice of physical activity and sports among adolescents – as it is the case of practice of sports by important people in their lives, encouragement to playing sports from important people in their lives, the importance of and reasons for playing sports among adolescents, and their intention to play sports in the future – predict psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction in this population, and whether effective practice of physical activity and sports by adolescents work as a mediating variable in these relations.

## 23.2 Method

### 23.2.1 Study Context

The metropolitan area of Porto Alegre is made up of 34 municipalities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, which represent an extension of the capital of Porto Alegre, being basically an urban feature (IBGE 2010). The study was conducted in the capital and in nearby municipalities, with similar characteristics, only in urban area.

### 23.2.2 Study Participants

This school-based, observational, descriptive and cross-sectional study is part of a broader research titled "Life and Health Contexts of School-Aged Adolescents in Southern Brazil". The participants are elementary school ninth graders enrolled in the state public network of ten cities in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil, in 2013. The age group was set at 12–19 years old, considering the minimum age at this level of education and the WHO criteria for the definition of the adolescence phase (WHO 1995). The population was identified from data provided by the Department of Education and Culture, RS, Brazil, in 2010 (N = 17.107 enrolled students). For the sample size calculation, a prev-

alence of 50% for any outcome, a maximum tolerated error of ±3% and a significance level of 5% was considered. To correct a possible design bias, the sample was increased by 50% plus 20% to support losses. The final sample was calculated on 2.829 students. The distribution of participants was identified by municipality. From these data, the sample was stratified in order to maintain proportionality. The number of schools required to reach the number of participants was drawn by municipality. In the sample composition in the ten municipalities, the valid cases were 3.396 students (approximately 20% of the population) from 69 schools. Among them, 52.8% were girls and the average age was 14.38 years (SD = 1.09).

### 23.2.3 Data Collection Instruments

Instruments for data collection were:

(a) Sociodemographic data inquiry (city, sex and age);
(b) The Health Behavior in School-aged Children survey- HBSC (Wold 1995), instrument developed by the WHO to study the lifestyles of adolescents in different countries (Wold 1995). The block of questions referring to physical activity and sports was used, which addressed: type of sports played outside of school hours, how often fathers, mothers, older siblings and best friends play sports (never, fewer than once a week, every week), how much fathers, mothers, older siblings and best friends encourage the practice of sports (never, sometimes, very often), chances of being playing sports in the future (I do not believe so, probably not, probably yes, I believe so), importance given to some reasons for playing sports among adolescents – having fun, being good at sports, making new friends, improving health, being in shape, looking good, being a sports star, pleasing parents (not important at all, quite important, very important). The practice of physical activity and sports was assessed by questions referring to: performance of a

physical activity that requires physical effort in terms of weekly frequency (never to 6–7 times a week) and duration (shorter than 5 min to longer than 45 min), practice of sports in terms of weekly frequency (from never to 6–7 times a week) and duration (from shorter than 5 min to longer than 45 min). These questions were turned into indexes for practice of physical activity and sports, as set by the instrument (1. Never practices it, 2. Practices fewer than once a week with duration longer or equal to 15–25 min, 3. Practices once a week with duration longer or equal to 15–25 min, 4. Practices fewer than 2–3 times a week with duration longer or equal to 15–15 min, 5. Practices 4–5 times a week with duration longer or equal to 15–25 min, 6. Practices 6–7 times a week with duration longer or equal to 15–25 min;

(c) The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), used to assess psychological wellbeing. The instrument consists of 12 items with a 4-point Likert-type answer scale; the lower the individual's score the higher his or her psychological wellbeing index. The GHQ-12 was studied in the Brazilian reality, with a sample of 563 youths (Sarriera et al. 1996) and obtained a 0.80 alpha.

(d) The International Wellbeing Group's Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS) measurer, which contains a single-item question ("How satisfied are you with your life as a whole?"). The latter is answered on a 11-point scale, varying from 0 (zero), totally dissatisfied, to 10 (ten), totally satisfied (International Wellbeing Group 2006).

## 23.2.4   Data Collection Procedure

The schools participating in the study were drawn by city. They were asked for approval and, after authorization, data collection was carried out in groups in classrooms, with average duration of 30 min. This was done with the participants' expressed agreement and legal guardians' authorization (signing of an informed consent form),

for those younger than 18 years old. Three weekly returns were scheduled so as to include students that missed school on previous dates of collection or those who had not brought the informed consent form signed by their legal guardians.

## 23.2.5   Data Analysis Procedures

The database was analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS 21.0. Descriptive analyses were performed in order to describe the participants and correlations of study variables.

Two models were proposed. The first one establishes Psychological Wellbeing as dependent variable (DV), Practice of Physical Activity/Sports as mediating variable (MV) and 18 variables referring to the practice of sports by important people in the life of the adolescents, encouragement to playing sports from important people in the life of the adolescents, importance given to reasons for the adolescents to play sports, and intention to play sports in the future as independent variables (IV). The second model has Life Satisfaction as Dependent Variable (DV), Practice of Physical Activity/Sports as mediating variable (MV) and the very same variables from the previous model as independent variables (IV). With the purpose of exploring relations between variables, hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted so as to check the predictive relation of independent variables for psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction and to identify whether practice of physical activity/sports by the adolescents works as a mediator of these relations.

So that a variable is taken as mediator, three conditions are necessary, according to Baron and Kenny (1986): the mediator is a significant predictor of the dependent variable; the independent variable is a significant predictor of the mediator; and, in the presence of the independent variable and the mediator, the significant relation that existed between the independent and the dependent variable decreases in magnitude. Data treatment complied with a 95% confidence level and a 5% significance level (p value $\leq 0.05$).

### 23.2.6 Ethical Matters

The study was developed in compliance with all ethical and legal aspects on research involving humans and was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Lutheran University of Brazil [*Universidade Luterana do Brasil*] (ULBRA).

## 23.3    Results

### 23.3.1 Descriptive Analyses

Table 23.1 displays sports activities performed by the school-aged adolescents

The majority of the adolescents did not specify what sports they played (30.5%). Among those who specified it, football was the most common one (24.3%), followed by dance (6.1%), bicycle (5.5%), running (4.5%) and volleyball (4.1%). However, data reveal that 16.9% of the adolescents did not play any sports.

Correlations between 19 study variables were assessed. The highest one was found between the psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction dependent variables (r = −0.0494). Among inde-

**Table 23.1** Sports modalities played by the study participants

| Sports | $F$ | $\%$ |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Football | 825 | 24.3 |
| Running | 152 | 4.5 |
| Basketball | 34 | 1.0 |
| Roller skating | 19 | 0.6 |
| Swimming | 39 | 1.1 |
| Aerobics | 11 | 0.3 |
| Handball | 24 | 0.7 |
| Track and Field | 17 | 0.5 |
| Dance | 209 | 6.1 |
| Climbing | 3 | 0.1 |
| Gymnastics | 48 | 1.4 |
| Volleyball | 139 | 4.1 |
| Hide-and-seek | 18 | 0.5 |
| Sports with rackets | 9 | 0.3 |
| Bicycle | 186 | 5.5 |
| Martial Arts | 56 | 1.6 |
| Practice of a non-specified sport | 1037 | 30.5 |
| None | 575 | 16.9 |

pendent variables, correlations varied from weak (r = 0.042) to moderate (r = 0.437).

### 23.3.2 Regression Analyses

Concerning the mediation test, the three conditions mentioned by Baron and Kenny (1986) were tested in each one of the analysis. The first one states that the mediating variable (Practice of Physical Activity/Sports) should be predictor of the dependent variable (Psychological Wellbeing and Life Satisfaction), condition which was confirmed by the results obtained (Psychological Wellbeing: $R^2 = 0.020$, *Beta* = −0.043, $p = 0.000$; Life Satisfaction: $R^2 = 0.015$, *Beta* = 0.144, $p = 0.000$). The second condition requires that each independent variable predicts the mediating variable (Practice of Physical Activity/Sports). The regression test indicates that this condition is effected, as shown in Table 23.2.

Finally, the third condition affirms that, in the presence of the independent variable and the mediator, the significant relation that existed between the independent variable and the dependent one decreases in magnitude. Table 23.3 presents the mediation test for independent variables. Results indicate that, in the presence of the Practice of Physical Activity/Sports variable, the relation between the independent variables referring to practice of sports by important people in the life of the adolescents, encouragement to playing sports from important people in the life of the adolescents, importance of reasons for playing sports among adolescents, and intention to play sports in the future increase in magnitude (*Beta* increases), and the explanatory power of psychological wellbeing raises ($R^2$ increases). The very same behavior of the variables occurs in relation to the Life Satisfaction dependent variable, indicating that there is a mediation connection in both models.

In the model referring to psychological wellbeing, practice of sports by the adolescents' mothers was not significant in the prediction model.

In the model referring to life satisfaction, practice of sports by mothers and older siblings

**Table 23.2** Relations between independent variables and the mediating variable (Practice of Physical Activity/Sports)

| Independent variables | $R^2$ | Beta | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Practice of sports – father | .011 | .105 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – mother | .006 | .080 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – brothers | .013 | .113 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – friend | .101 | .318 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – father | .041 | .202 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – mother | .021 | .145 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – brothers | .035 | .187 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – friend | .074 | .272 | .000** |
| Practice of sports in the future | .041 | .203 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – for fun | .002 | .042 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be good in sports | .034 | .185 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to make new friends | .003 | .052 | .002* |
| Practice of sports – to improve health | .006 | .075 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be in a good shape | .009 | .097 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be a sport' star | .040 | .199 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to please parents | .004 | .031 | .000** |

*p ≤ 0.005; **p ≤ 0.001

**Table 23.3** Prediction model of each independent variable concerning psychological wellbeing, and prediction model of each independent variable concerning psychological wellbeing with practice of physical activities/sports variable as mediator

| Independents and mediator variables | Dependent variable | $R^2$ | Beta | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Practice of sports – father | | .005 | −.068 | 15.685 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – father | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.053 | 39.939 | .002* |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .023 | −.136 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – mother | | .001 | −.024 | 1.927 | .165 |
| Practice of sports – mother | Psychological wellbeing | – | – | 69.882 | .464 |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .020 | −.142 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – brothers | | .005 | −.071 | 17.326 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – brothers | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.056 | 40.408 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .023 | −.136 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – friend | | .012 | −.110 | 41.279 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – friend | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.072 | 43.148 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .025 | −.119 | | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – father | | .017 | −.129 | 57.733 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – father | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.105 | 53.783 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .031 | −.121 | | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – mother | | .011 | −.107 | 39.400 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – mother | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.088 | 48.559 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .028 | −.129 | | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – brothers | | .014 | −.118 | 48.229 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – brothers | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.095 | 50.507 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .029 | −.124 | | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – friend | | .006 | −.075 | 19.260 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – friend | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.039 | 37.483 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .022 | −.131 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports in the future | | .016 | −.128 | 56.251 | .000** |
| Practice of sports in the future | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.103 | 53.150 | .000** |

(continued)

**Table 23.3** (continued)

| Independents and mediator variables | Dependent variable | $R^2$ | Beta | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .030 | −.121 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – for fun | | .006 | −.080 | 21.649 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – for fun | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.074 | 44.600 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .026 | −.139 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be good in sports | | .008 | −.089 | 27.302 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be good in sports | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.065 | 42.236 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .024 | −.130 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to make new friends | | .005 | −.068 | 15.580 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to make new friends | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.060 | 41.374 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .024 | −.139 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to improve health | | .009 | −.097 | 34.423 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to improve health | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.087 | 48.366 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .028 | −.135 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be in a good shape | | .007 | −.081 | 22.282 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be in a good shape | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.068 | 42.971 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .025 | −.135 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be a sport' star | | .010 | −.101 | 35.345 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be a sport' star | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.076 | 44.848 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .026 | −.127 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to please parents | | .010 | −.100 | 34.430 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to please parents | Psychological wellbeing | .020 | −.091 | 49.751 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .028 | −.136 | | .000** |

*p ≤ 0.005; **p ≤ 0.001

obtained significant results in the simple linear regression, losing significance in the hierarchical regression. The other results indicate that the practice of physical activities/sports, as mediator, contributes fundamentally to the explanation of life satisfaction among school-aged adolescents (Table 23.4).

### 23.3.3 Discussion

The objective of this investigation was to assess whether effective practice of physical activity/sports could work as a mediating variable in the relation between influences on the practice of physical activities and sports (practice of sports by important people to the adolescent, encouragement to playing sports from important people to the adolescent, importance given to reasons for playing sports, and intention to play sports in the future) and psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. Results confirm the study hypotheses,

as they indicate that, in the presence of the effective practice of physical activity/sports variable, the relation between the dimensions of the influences on practice of physical activity/sports increase in magnitude, just as the explanatory power of psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction raises, revealing the existence of mediation in both models.

In the results presented, practice of Physical Activity/Sports predicts the Psychological Wellbeing and Life Satisfaction of the studied adolescents. This evidence bases scientifically that a decision made towards a healthier lifestyle, by means of practice of physical activities, significantly increases important aspects of quality of life. The literature shows that factors related to the personal satisfaction and psychological wellbeing of adolescents, mediated by practice of physical activity, are multiple and interconnected. The identification of patterns individualized by subjects and/or groups is recommended so as to guide promotion and intervention strategies.

**Table 23.4** Prediction model of each independent variable concerning life satisfaction, and prediction model of each independent variable concerning life satisfaction with practice of physical activity/sports variable as mediator

| Independents and mediator variables | Dependent variable | $R^2$ | Beta | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Practice of sports – father | | .008 | .088 | 26.716 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – father | Life satisfaction | .015 | .076 | 35.303 | |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .020 | .113 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – mother | | .002 | .040 | 5.447 | .020* |
| Practice of sports – mother | Life satisfaction | – | – | 50.280 | .994 |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .015 | .121 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – brothers | | .002 | .040 | 5.518 | .019* |
| Practice of sports – brothers | Life satisfaction | – | – | 50.280 | .987 |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .015 | .121 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – friend | | .005 | .073 | 18.307 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – friend | Life satisfaction | .015 | .039 | 27.499 | |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .016 | .108 | | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – father | | .013 | .114 | 44.644 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – father | Life satisfaction | .015 | .093 | 39.853 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .023 | .102 | | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – mother | | .013 | .113 | 43.576 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – mother | Life satisfaction | .015 | .097 | 41.422 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .024 | .107 | | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – brothers | | .009 | .096 | 31.751 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – brothers | Life satisfaction | .015 | .076 | 35.020 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .020 | .106 | | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – friend | | .008 | .087 | 25.917 | .000** |
| Encouragement to sports – friend | Life satisfaction | .015 | .059 | 30.700 | .001 |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .018 | .105 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports in the future | | .013 | .114 | 44.432 | .000** |
| Practice of sports in the future | Life satisfaction | .015 | .093 | 39.753 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .023 | .102 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – for fun | | .007 | .083 | 23.552 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – for fun | Life satisfaction | .014 | .078 | 35.844 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .020 | .117 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be good in sports | | .003 | .055 | 10.482 | .001 |
| Practice of sports – to be good in sports | Life satisfaction | .015 | .034 | 27.121 | .048* |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .016 | .114 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to make new friends | | .005 | .072 | 17.657 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to make new friends | Life satisfaction | .015 | .066 | 32.714 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .019 | .117 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to improve health | | .009 | .096 | 31.423 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to improve health | Life satisfaction | .015 | .087 | 38.445 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .022 | .114 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be in a good shape | | .003 | .056 | 10.717 | .001* |
| Practice of sports – to be in a good shape | Life satisfaction | .015 | .045 | 28.614 | .009* |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .017 | .116 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be a sport' star | | .006 | .076 | 19.941 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to be a sport' star | Life satisfaction | .015 | .054 | 30.131 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .017 | .110 | | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to please parents | | .009 | .095 | 31.169 | .000** |
| Practice of sports – to please parents | Life satisfaction | .015 | .088 | 38.688 | .000** |
| Practice of physical activities/sports | | .022 | .115 | | .000** |

*p ≤ 0.005; **p ≤ 0.001

Such strategies are important to the extent that adolescents may not identify themselves as sedentary, in addition to not caring about the deleterious effects of this behavior (Pyky et al. 2015). A strategy to promote the practice of physical activity that can be suggested from the results obtained is to provide this population perspectives for the practice of sports in adult life.

Practice of physical activity by mothers and its connection with adolescents doing it too does not predict the latter's psychological wellbeing; however, fathers and friends playing sports are capable of predicting this wellbeing. This shows the importance of examples given by fathers and friends as to practice of physical activity in the life of adolescents. These are more accurate predictors of psychological wellbeing, when these variables are compared to practice of sports by mothers. Similar data were found with respect to life satisfaction. In this sense, practice of physical activity by mothers are less likely to influence the quality of life of adolescents, and this influence is more restricted to fathers and friends. In the literature, results revealed by Alberto and Júnior (2016) corroborates this evidence, since the authors showed that the prevalence of physical inactivity was associated with adolescents living with their mothers only. This becomes more intense in the case of daughters, whose mothers usually give them less freedom for them to move around urban spaces, which limits the possibility of exercising. This piece of data relates to the evidence that boys are physically more active than girls, possibly influenced by sociocultural aspects. Studies show that boys engage more in physical activities, especially those of higher intensity (Duncan et al. 2006; Levin et al. 2003). These differences are culturally developed, because while boys are educated to express themselves physically, girls are encouraged to engage in more delicate activities (Weinberg and Gould 1995),

Encouragement to playing sports from important people in the life of the adolescents, such as parents, siblings and friends, proved very important in predicting the life satisfaction and wellbeing of the participants. This result is supported by the literature (Laird et al. 2016; Lau et al. 2016; Mota et al. 2016; Quaresma 2014), which showed

association between support from friends and family and increase in the adolescents' physical activity levels. Another study evidences that lack of encouragement from physical education teachers, representing the school environment, relates to lower levels of physical activity among female adolescents (Alberto and Júnior 2016). Apparently, about mothers, it is more important that they stimulate their children to play sports instead of practicing physical activity themselves. In addition, besides being an object of encouragement to the practice of sports, adolescents also end up acting as subjects of encouragement, since they have an influence encouraging parents and friends to exercise, from the moment they feel internally motivated to do so (Rosa 2016).

A study with adolescent footballers reinforced the importance of parents supporting the development of youths and their satisfaction through sports, pointing that a reduction in this support as the adolescent ages was related to less satisfaction, worse performance and higher rates of people quitting sports (Santos and Gonçalves 2016). The absence of encouragement to the practice of sports associates with physical inactivity among adolescents Alberto and Junior 2016). Nevertheless, one should not mistake encouragement for pressure, since professional adolescent athletes can present a very heavy stress load, especially due to demands for high sport performance. These demands end up exposing them to extenuating training, oftentimes without the physical, mental and biochemical recovery necessary to relieve the physical exhaustion caused by training (Silva et al. 2016).

There was no reason for practice of sports that was not related to effective practice and personal satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. This shows that regardless of the reason that leads adolescents to exercise, physical activity contributes significantly to improving quality of life, since it improves health and helps them make friends. These factors, making friends and maintaining a good health, were pointed by adolescents as more important reasons than their performance in the sports played (Silveira Santos et al. 2016).

Chances of playing sports in the future was associated with current practice of physical activity among the adolescents and are a significant factor for their psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. This draws attention to the importance of transposing the practice of sports and physical activity to the lifestyle adolescents will adopt as adults. Therefore, educating so physical activity is not limited to periods intended to this purpose only in school curricula is fundamental, since among active adolescents the mere idea of playing sports in the future boosts the individual's wellbeing and life satisfaction. The literature shows that adults that exercise regularly present greater perception of past behaviors concerning practice of sports, enjoy physical activity more and have greater wellbeing (Carneiro and Gomes 2016). Thus, providing adolescents with a curriculum with regular practice of physical activity induces the formation of a memory of physical activity in adulthood. The greater the perception of this practice in the past, the greater the chances of continuing with this lifestyle in the present and in the future. Within this context, it is considered that in active adolescents the future projection of exercising is important to the extent that the memory of this practice in adolescence is a predicting factors of wellbeing in adults.

According to Rosa (2016) and Grao-Cruces et al. (2015), by exercising beyond the limits of physical education classes, youths present more positive attitudes about their fondness of and importance attributed to the subject and to the practice of physical exercise. As for adolescents with less intention to play sports after completing high school, they showed lower physical activity indexes. This evidence reveals that personal motivation in the search for leisure, resulting personal relationships and health promotion are the main factors of encouragement capable of changing the behavior of adolescents concerning sports.

Although encouragement, reasons and future perspective for effective practice of physical activity and sports by adolescents work as mediating variables for personal satisfaction and psychological wellbeing, family members and friends playing sports, encouraging adolescents to exercise or adolescents intending to play sports in the future are of no use if the adolescent himself or herself does not want to do it. In this way, the practice of physical activity by adolescents operates as a virtuous cycle, where fruits from this activity are reaped, and broadens indirect influences. Besides, adolescents who exercise spend less time per week performing sedentary activities such as watching TV, playing videogame or browsing the internet, than sedentary adolescents (Ferreira et al. 2016).

As limitations of the present study, one should consider that the final data are from 2013, what can represent a lack of time in relation to nowadays practices. Another issue is that it was conducted using self-report measures, which can generate some type of bias in terms of interpretation, especially about the concept of physical education, which is broader and less structured than that of practice of sports. Likewise, it is possible that the interpretation of practice of sports by adolescents might have, in some cases, being restricted to physical education classes at school, since the research took place in a school environment.

The results found reinforce the importance of contextual influences on the practice of physical activity as a means to improve wellbeing and life satisfaction among school-aged adolescents. Nevertheless, and above all, they indicate that effective practice of physical activity/sports by adolescents is the best predictor for their wellbeing and life satisfaction in this phase of their life cycle. In this sense, it is recommendable that family, school and social contexts seek to encourage adolescents directly to practice physical activity and sports.

The experience of exercising and playing sports, linked to a context in which this lifestyle is valued and encouraged, represents a determinant to the current quality of life of adolescents, considering their wellbeing and life satisfaction. In this stage of their life cycle, the effects of this practice, in addition to having a direct influence on their physical and emotional health, can contribute to healthier choices in other domains of life, contributing to the prevention of behaviors that are harmful to their health, which, often-

times, derive from negative mood states. Moreover, the favorable intention to continue with the practice of physical activity and sports in the future represents a predictor of quality of life in adulthood as well.

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# Latinx and African American Youth Participation in Sports and Leisure: The Impact on Social Identity, Educational Outcomes, and Quality of Life

Leticia Villarreal Sosa

**Abstract**

Numerous studies have documented the positive effects of participation in sports and other leisure activities; many of these studies noting the positive effects on school engagement and community engagement outside of the school environment. (Fletcher AC, Nickerson PF, Wright KL: J Comm Psychol 31:641–659, 2003; Zaff JF, Moore KA, Romano Papillo A, Williams S: J Adolesc Res 18:599–630, 2003; Eime RM, Young JA, Harvey JT, Charity MJ, Payne WR: Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act 10:135, 2003, etc.). For students of color, particularly African American and Latinx children, there is concern over the continued disparities in high school completion rates and educational

outcomes. In the United States, recent education policy, the Every Student Succeeds Act, acknowledged the need to look at the whole child, provide a holistic approach and focus on protective factors in neighborhoods with complex realities. In addition, it is well recognized that addressing school success must also include the need to emphasize student mental and physical well being by focusing on protective factors such as active participation in school and community activities. Considering this context, the purpose of this study is to understand how school and community activities shape the content and meaning of students' social identities and how those social identities influence their quality of life and engagement in school. Specifically, to understand from students' own lived experience, how they experience quality of life. This study is informed by a borderlands perspective and social identity theory and uses a qualitative design drawing from The Student Life in High Schools Project (SLP), a longitudinal study of the transition to high school. The primary source of data for this project is the individual student interviews of 64 Mexican origin and African American youth attending Chicago Public High Schools during their sophomore year of high school. The Extended Case Method (ECM) grounded in a Chicana feminist epistemology was employed. The ECM

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itself combines qualitative research from various traditions and emphasizes a reflexive model of science allowing for an extension of existing theories.

## 24.1 Latinx and African American Youth Participation in Sports and Leisure: The Impact on Social Identity, Educational Outcomes, and Quality of Life

Latinx and African American students continue to be face high drop out rates and lag behind in standardized testing and college attendance compared to their white counterparts (Gándara and Contreras 2009; Vega et al. 2012, 2015). While issues of identity, engagement in the classroom, and factors such as parental involvement have been widely explored among both of these populations (e.g. González et al. 2001; Jones-Walker 2015), there has been very little focus on the relationship of sports and leisure activities in the school and community on academic trajectories and social identity. Furthermore, there has been limited conceptualization about how the concept of quality of life of urban students of color is both shaped by and different from the conditions they experience such as disproportionality, violence, poverty, and lack of resources. This chapter seeks to understand the role that participation in sports and leisure activities plays in social identity development, engagement, academic trajectories, and the experience of quality of life. Between 1995 and 1998, other researchers and I followed a group of students over the transition to high school from three elementary schools in Chicago.

Over the 3 years, we followed students, interviewing them three times a year documenting their academic progress, struggles, and successes as they experienced a critical period of adolescent development. Contextually, this was also a time that the Rodney King, an African American taxi driver, was beaten by four Los Angeles police officers. This police beating was caught on video; all four police officers were charged with use of excessive force and assault with a deadly weapon, but all four were acquitted. It is said that this triggered the 1992 Los Angeles riots in which 55 people were killed and resulted in the summoning of the California National Guard. Similarly, this was also a time of heightened anti-immigrant sentiment that included the beating of an undocumented man by border patrol agents in California. While it was caught on videotape, this incident did not result in similar outrage and was reported mostly within the Spanish news outlets in the U.S. This period of anti-immigrant sentiment was accompanied by numerous policy reforms resulting in limited or no access to public benefits for resident aliens. While these incidents occurred far from Chicago, students participating in this study were deeply affected by these events. This was a unique historical period, but has relevance to the current U.S. context both during the Donald Trump campaign as well as after his election as the 45th president of the U.S. Already, both African American and Latinx communities have felt the fear associated with an increase in hate crimes immediately following the election, the most common incidents targeting immigrant and black communities (Southern Poverty Law Center 2016). By looking at the in depth case studies of Latinx and African American students, we can understand how participation in school sports and leisure activities can increase their sense of engagement and positive social identity, providing protective factors that can ultimately improve their persistence and achievement in school and quality of life, particularly when facing hostile social contexts such as the ones experienced by students in this study and students experiencing the current political and social reality.

## 24.2 Latinx and African Americans and School Achievement

### 24.2.1 Latinx Students

In 1998, Secada and colleagues published a report stating that one in three Hispanic youth

between the ages of 16 and 24 left school without a high school diploma or alternative certificate such as a GED. Orfield et al. (2004) note that only 53% of all Hispanic students graduate from high schools with Hispanic males faring even worse with a graduation rate of 48%. Furthermore, Secada and colleagues stated that among first generation immigrants, Hispanics were at an increased risk of dropping out. Hispanics make up 56% of the immigrant population; yet account for 90% of all immigrant dropouts. Of particular concern was census data showing that subsequent generations of Hispanics born in the U.S. had higher dropout rates than the first generation born in the U.S. (Hispanic Dropout Project Data Book 1995). Thus, dropping out is a problem among Hispanic immigrants and one that does not disappear in subsequent generations. The dropout data on Hispanic immigrants and future generations compels us to recognize the complexity of the dropout problem among Hispanics, with Hispanic immigrants being at higher risk than other immigrant groups *and* experiencing continued high rates of dropping out in subsequent generations. While there has been dramatic progress in graduation rates over the last decade (H.S. diploma or it's equivalent such as a GED) for Latinx students, reaching a record low of 14% in 2014, they continue to lag behind the 8% drop out rate of African Americans and 5% non-Hispanic whites (Fry 2014).

Latinx students are at higher risk for dropout due to unique social factors they face. Latinx students attend the most racially segregated schools (Chapa and Valencia 1993; Orfield et al. 2004). Independent of poverty, the level of segregation is related to higher dropout rates (Orfield et al. 2004). For example, Illinois has a graduation rate of 75%, but the few districts with high levels of segregation have an average graduation rate of 51.8% (Orfield et al. 2004). In 2004, a report focused on Chicago Public Schools and Latinxs concluded that educational policies at the local, state, and federal level had in fact "pushed" Latinxs backward rather than forward in increasing graduation rates (Aviles et al. 2004). For example, Aviles et al. (2004) discuss how Latinxs have been hurt by the over-emphasis on high

stakes testing that does not adequately address the instructional contexts Latinx students experience; the use of assessment policies that do not account for level of English language proficiency, and the lack of bilingual instruction in early childhood programs.

Policies that negatively affect Latinx students continue to persist. Approximately half of Latinx students enter school speaking primarily Spanish (Gándara and Contreras 2009). However, various states have passed ballot initiatives limiting native language instruction despite the lack of evidence that these policies benefit students (Gándara and Contreras 2009; Rolstad and MacSwan 2010). In addition, the Dream Act, federal legislation that would provide permanent resident status to students who graduate from U.S. high schools and complete at least 2 years of college or military service, has failed to pass. Aviles and colleagues conclude their report with a demand that Chicago Public Schools (CPS) make immediate efforts to address the inequities they outline. Not only is it unlikely that CPS will take action to address the recommendations in this report, but the education of Latinx students will be further compromised as the CPS responds to Illinois' budget crisis by taking measures such as increasing class size, reducing support services, limiting extra-curricular activities, cutting bilingual education and early childhood programs, and limiting access to full day kindergarten (Chicago Public Schools 2010a, b). As Hurtado et al. (2009) state, due to the size of the population, addressing this issue is no longer just a matter of social justice for the Latinx community, but a matter of economic necessity and relevance for both the Latinx community and the nation. Dropping out has serious consequences for individuals and the communities in which they live.

### 24.2.2 African American Students

Similar to Latinx students, African Americans and their families place a significant importance on education as a vehicle for upward social and economic mobility (Steward 2007). However,

African American students experience poorer academic outcomes such as standardized test scores compared to their Asian American and White peers (Steward 2007). When the variable of socioeconomic status is controlled, African Americans still perform less well compared to white students on test scores, grades, educational attainment, and school retention (Kao and Thompson 2003). Reading and mathematic achievement scores, on average, are lower for African American students from first through twelfth grades (Booker 2004). The achievement gap results in subsequent differences in high school graduation rates and college attendance (Slavin and Madden 2006).

African American students face social and economic contextual barriers as well. African American students are three times more likely to live in low income neighborhoods compared to white students (Aud et al. 2013). What is more troubling about the experiences of African American youth in schools is what has been termed the "school to prison pipeline." African American students, particularly boys, experience negative stereotypes and exclusion through suspensions and being labeled as special education students (Noguera 2008). School staff make assumptions about these youth as "potentially violent" and are treated as such (Villarreal Sosa et al. 2017). African American children have been more criminalized in U.S. schools in the past three decades compared to children from other racial backgrounds (Howard 2016; Sussman 2012). This level of scrutiny and use of exclusionary consequences begins early in their academic lives. African American children make up 18% of all preschool age children, but account for 42% of all preschool suspensions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education 2014). Other data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education (2014) states that Black students made up 18% of students in the public schools in 2013, but were 40% of the students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions, 32% of the children arrested in schools, and 40% of children in the juvenile justice system.

In this context, the Black Lives Matters (BLM) movement has had direct implications for the education of African American youth. The BLM movement emerged in response to the violence towards and deaths of unarmed Black men and boys in the U.S. by police. At the very core of the BLM movement is the emphasis on the fact that Black people in the U.S. are denied their basic human rights and dignity (Howard 2016). It can be argued that the basic dignity has been denied for many African American youth in the school setting, particularly given the heightened policing of African American children in the schools. Not only does the criminalization and exclusionary approach that schools are using violate student's basic dignity, but is also extremely costly and ineffective (Howard 2016). For African American youth and other youth of color, it is critical to develop better models that promote healthy social and psychological development and that offer new ways of engaging students in learning and in school. Given this historically and currently hostile environment African American youth face in schools, it is important to understand the role that sports and leisure play in countering the negative stereotypes and harsh treatment as well as offering students others ways to engage in school settings or the community that can promote healthy development.

African American and Latinx students experience a complex set of social and economic factors that challenge their ability to persist in school and pursue higher education. The continued achievement gap has continued despite varied attempts at policy and school reform. A quality of life theoretical framework could provide a needed depth of understanding of the lived experience of students of color and how to better assist them in schools. Most reforms have targeted testing, additional school content, disciplinary reforms, or changes in pedagogical approaches. However, despite our understanding of the importance of relationships, there has been little focus on understanding how students of color experience their quality of life given these conditions, thus limiting policy recommendations and reforms. As Rojas (2009) states, education is not only about the development of skills for making a living, but

also skills for having a satisfactory life and contributes to the well being of others. Understanding social conditions and inequities are crucial, but they do not provide a holistic picture and miss other issues such as psychological and relational needs as well as other activities such as volunteerism and leisure activities that contribute to quality of life.

## 24.3  Standards Based Reform and Neoliberalism

The discussion of sports and leisure and the role these activities play in the quality of life and education for students of color must address the current context of standards based reform rooted in neoliberal education policy. Unfortunately, this approach has been short sighted and narrow, neglecting relational aspects, affective states, and complexity of human beings (Rojas 2009). The neoliberal approach is founded on the belief that performance-based testing and accountability measures are the most efficient ways of reducing these achievement gaps between different racial groups (Stone and Moragne-Patterson 2017). Neoliberal ideology that emphasizes privatization, individualism, meritocracy, market deregulation, and decreased spending on social institutions such as education and health care is at the core of these education reforms. This ideology has claimed to focus on the elimination of the racial achievement gap while simultaneously reducing federal spending on education and moving towards privatization through the use of charter schools. This movement has created a pressure to standardize curriculum with a focus on basic reading/writing/math and less focus on enrichment subjects, social studies, and extra-curricular activities. While the current Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in 2015, is similarly grounded in these neoliberal accountability and testing focused approaches of the No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001, the ESSA has several noted changes, including references to a "well rounded" education and requires that school districts that receive more than $30,000 in funding from this block grant spend at least 20%

of that funding on an activity that helps students become more "well rounded" (Klein 2016). It is unknown to the degree that this emphasis on "well rounded" education will include or increase the opportunities for sports and leisure activities for students. However, this could be a potential opportunity to focus the discourse on school reform and student experiences on the more holistic approach of a quality of life framework.

## 24.4  Sports and Leisure Activities and Quality of Life

Quality of life studies span decades and include the interdisciplinary exploration of varied themes from health to economic development (Tonon 2010). For the purposes of this study, quality of life will be defined in this study as "individual's perceptions of their position in life in the context of culture and value systems in which they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns" (WHOQOL Group 1995; cited in Skevington et al. 2004, p. 2). A definition that includes perceptions within a cultural and value based context is particularly relevant for the exploration of Quality of Life among Latinx and African American students in the U.S. context because of their unique social conditions. Furthermore, exploring more specific domains of physical activity may provide valuable insight into the subjective experience of the physical activity and dimensions that may increase the positive impact on quality of life for these youth. Specifically within the school context, this paper will explore the experiences with their sports or leisure activities and their perceptions of position in life as it related to their goals, expectations, and concerns about their education and future opportunities or plans. In addition, within their school context, there will be attention to their degree of connectedness and experience with their school contexts. Thus, factors such as relational experiences in the school or community context, students' affective states, and students' own perceptions of the quality of life.

There has been an increasing interest in participation in physical activity and its beneficial

affect on health and quality of life (Abdou Omorou et al. 2013). According to Abdou Omorou et al. (2013), physical activity has multiple domains such as job related, domestic, transportation, and leisure activity. Limited studies on the differential impact of the various domains of physical activity has shown a positive association between leisure related physical activity and quality of life while demonstrating mixed results regarding other types of physical activity (Jurakic et al. 2010; Valadares et al. 2011; Vuillemin et al. 2005). However, Abdou Omorou and colleagues found that there was a stronger association of sports to quality of life for those at either the lowest psychological and physical health or the highest. Thus, this has potential implications particularly for vulnerable communities experiencing high levels of trauma, community violence, mental health challenges, and a range of physical health epidemics.

Efforts to promote adolescent health and quality of life have often focused on risk behaviors such as drug use, early sexual initiation or gang involvement. However, there is an increasing focus on "protective factors" that can help buffer an adolescent from behaviors that place them at risk for adverse outcomes (CDC 2009). Protective factors can include individual characteristics such as a positive view of one's future, parental presence, participation in school activities, and school connectedness (CDC 2009). In this case, participation in sports specifically can help promote some of these protective factors and thus, potentially increase quality of life or adolescents. Participation in sports can increase a sense of school connectedness or the belief that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals (CDC 2009).

Specifically regarding educational outcomes, a number of studies have demonstrated a positive association between students' involvement with extracurricular activities and their academic achievement such as grades (Broh 2002; Marsh 1992; McNeal 1995). Broh, for example, found that participation in interscholastic sports showed consistent benefits for students' grades, with a particular benefit in math. As Johnson et al. (2001) suggest, students who feel more attached

to school exert more effort, and those who participate in extracurricular activities develop increased positive experiences in school, thus potentially increasing their school attachment and commitment. Studies on structured after school interests have shown that the skills and knowledge gained during those activities can transfer to in-class experiences. Structured activities include those that are organized, supervised leisure practices in the community or at school (Eccles and Templeton 2002; Bartko and Eccles 2003). Unstructured activities, which are typically driven by personal interests and do not involve adult supervision can also have a positive impact on academically successful behaviors (Ford et al. 2015).

For vulnerable communities, sports and leisure can be an important way to increase social inclusion and social capital while reducing crime and truancy (Lee et al. 2012). Adolescents who showed greater affinity for their sports team reported more prosocial behavior (Bruner et al. 2014). In addition, participation in sports can solidify social identities and promote a sense of belonging to a social group or community (Lee et al. 2012). Bruner et al. (2015) also find that school team athletes showed a greater degree of both interdependence and positive social identity. While neither the Lee et al. (2012) nor the Bruner et al. (2015) study focuses on race or students of color, their findings have important implications for students of color. These studies focus on a social identity factors such as ingroup ties, bonding, and belongingness; all factors that can assist students in negotiation of hostile social contexts. For a highly marginalized group within the U.S., fostering a sense of belonging to a social group can help to buffer the impact of the hostile, anti-immigrant climate or the daily experiences of racial discrimination in the schools. Belonging to a valued social group can also mitigate negative perceptions by teachers and school staff in their encounters with students. In order to better understand this complex and interactive process, this chapter examines multiple case studies of Latinx and African American youth and how sports as a leisure or school activity contribute to their sense of positive distinctiveness of their

social identities as well as their quality of life and school trajectories.

Perspectives on identity formation have become more sophisticated over the years, showing that ethnic solidarity can co-occur with either economic progress or downward mobility depending on the social context and social identity developed (Fernández-Kelly and Schauffler 1996; Rumbaut 1996). Much of the research on social identity among immigrants and the second generation has focused on the importance of educational institutions in shaping that identity (Olson 1997; Portes and MacLeod 1996). For Latinx and African American students, this process is complicated by a legacy of oppression, conquest, slavery, and segregation (Elenes 1997; Ogbu 1989; Pizarro 2005). Thus, a social identity combined with a borderlands framework, considers the historical and political context of the youth, the intersection of multiple social identities, and individual agency in negotiating social identity. These frameworks can help to provide additional nuanced understanding of the "four qualities of life" and the interaction between inner and outer quality of life chances and inner and outer quality of life results (Rojas 2009, p. 6). Thus, a student's negotiating of social identity and social position, which includes "livability of environment", "a person's life abilities", "utility of a person's life," and "a person's appreciation of and satisfaction with their life" (Rojas, p. 6).

## 24.5  Theoretical Framework

### 24.5.1  Social Identity

Social identity captures the relationship between identity as a social product and a social force: referring to "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his[/her] knowledge of his[/her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1978, p. 63). As the social context shapes social identity, one's social identity offers a framework for negotiating and giving meaning to a particular social environment. Consequently, the combina-

tion of distinct social environments and the individual's responses to those environments works to create differences in social identities and behavior of individuals who share the same group membership.

The development of a social identity involves three processes: social categorization, social comparisons, and psychological work (Tajfel 1981). Social categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, and disability are only meaningful within the social context through the process of social categorization, and subsequently social comparisons of the group as it relates to perceived differences and value attached to those differences (Hurtado et al. 1994; Tajfel 1978). The third process involved is the psychological work prompted by the universal motive for positive distinctiveness (Tajfel 1978). Because being categorized into a devalued group typically triggers this process, it is those social groups that are disparaged that are most likely to become social identities for individuals (Hurtado et al. 1994). Thus social identities can also be defined as a sense of belonging to social group, reflecting the process of self-categorization in order to achieve positive distinctiveness (Lee et al. 2012). The literature has well documented that a strong cultural identity is a protective factor and is associated with higher self-esteem and coping skills, particularly when navigating racial microaggressions (Jones-Walker 2015; Oyserman et al. 2007; Villarreal Sosa 2011). This chapter will explore the types of social identities developed by students, and how sports and leisure play a role in those identities.

### 24.5.2  Borderlands Theory

Borderlands theory provides a specific cultural and political context in which to understand the Mexican experience in the United States, accounting for the historical and political ways in which Chicanos are constituted as "Other," the social construction of identity, and multiple subjectivity (Elenes 1997). According to Elenes (1997), borderlands theory is "a discourse, a language, that explains the social conditions of subjects with hybrid identities" (para. 2). Latina feminist psy-

chologists and social workers have adopted bor-derlands theory, emphasizing the history and culture of the particular group in their social con-text and accounting for how that local contexts shape social identity (Hurtado and Cervantez 2009; Villarreal Sosa and Moore 2013).

Anzaldúa (1987) expresses that a borderlands identity is not particular to the Southwest and can be a psychological, cultural, or spiritual space for anyone dealing with a multiplicity of identities. Borderlands theory extends social identity theory by addressing how individuals cope with the neg-ative categorizations, including the strategic response of developing a hybrid and flexible identity (Hurtado 2003b; Hurtado and Cervantez 2009). Approaching the experiences of the stu-dents in this study from a borderlands perspective acknowledges their unique experiences in a Midwest context, and informs how they view race and ethnicity, and how they cope with dis-empowering educational experiences. While a borderlands perspective is grounded in the expe-riences of Mexican origin individuals, it is an approach that dovetails (Hurtado 2003b) into existing feminist theory, advancing knowledge and building on that base. This is particularly rel-evant for African Americans as their has been few studies that seek to understand the experiences of what is often called "biculturalism,"(Rust et al. 2011) but has now been advanced by Chicana feminist theory to be a much more complex and nuanced understanding of identity.

### 24.5.3 Quality of Life

A borderlands and social identity framework dovetails well with a quality of life framework. Tonon (2007) argues that the quality of life refers to the material and psychosocial environments, considers social and psychological components of well being, and how individuals experience and evaluate their situation and social conditions. Considering a person's assessment and evalua-tion of their quality of life necessitates under-standing the psychological work involved in negotiating social identities, a need for positive distinctiveness, and grounding in their social and cultural realities. Thus, a social identity and qual-ity of life framework dovetail each other well, creating a comprehensive understanding of the subjective understanding and response to the psy-chosocial environment as one evaluates their quality of life. Useful conceptualizations of qual-ity of life consider "life chances" or the opportu-nities a person has for a good life, whether they are internal (e.g. one's mental or physical health) or external (e.g. neighborhood conditions) (Veenhoven 2000 cited in Rojas 2009). In addi-tion, Rojas (2009) discusses the importance of non-economic goods such as relational goods. The students in this study provide insight into their views of these external and internal factors, and in particular, the role that the school environ-ment can play in their subjective appraisals of their quality of life.

## 24.6 Methodology

### 24.6.1 Extended Case Method

This study employed the Extended Case Method (ECM) (Burawoy 1998; Miranda 2002), grounded in a Chicana feminist epistemology. ECM is an interpretive qualitative method that allows for multiple sources of knowledge, and a focus on a unique "case" to expand or re-works existing theory (Burawoy 1998; Eliasoph and Lichterman 1999; Samuels 2009, 2010). This approach also contextualizes the experiences of the students within the specific community, his-torical, and political context. A Chicana feminist epistemology allows for complexities and multi-ple meanings, expanding the work that has been described by feminists as "oppositional con-sciousness" (Sandoval 2000). In addition, a Chicana feminist approach adds the importance or centering of theory developed from the lived experience (Hurtado 2003a). In this way, the researcher honors what Hurtado (2003a) refers to as relational dovetailing or honoring and building on existing theory that is the foundation of ECM, while centering the lived experience in this process. The use of ECM aims to further our understanding of social identity theory, border-

lands identities, and the experiences of African American and Latinx youth as it related to their sports and leisure activities and quality of life. As Susniene and Jurkauskas (2009) state, the concept of quality of life is multi-dimensional and should be subject to both qualitative and quantitative studies. The guiding questions for this study include: (1) To what extent are students participating in sports or leisure activities in high school? (2) What role do these activities play in the development of their social identity and sense of positive distinctiveness? (3) What benefits to they see to their participation? (4) And finally, how do these activities play a role in their educational experience and quality of life?

## 24.7   Sample

This study uses two subsamples (22 students from a South Side High School and 32 students from a West Side High School) of a larger sample of 98 youth in the Student Life in High Schools Project (SLP), a longitudinal study of the transition to high school in a large Midwestern, U.S. city. The SLP drew from multiple sources, including student and parent interviews, school records, and teacher assessments. The first subset of students attended a vocational high school serving a predominately African American population. At the South Side school site, the SLP recruited all 49 students planning to attend the Brookside High School that would serve as the research site. Of those 49 who were recruited, 39 returned their consent forms and a final sample of 31 students was selected that best represented the student population at the school accounting for academic test scores and gender. The sample of 31 students included 14 females and 17 males. In terms of reading scores, 41.4% were below grade level, 31.4% at grade level, 14.3% above grade level, and 2.9% were missing that information. A final sample of 22 student narratives is used for this analysis due to attrition and mobility in the remaining sample. Approximately 75% of the parents of this sample had earned a high school diploma or GED with an average of 13 years of schooling.

For the West Side school site, the SLP selected a stratified random sample of 68 students from a list of the 189 students at West Side Elementary planning to attend Zapata High School. Students were stratified across homerooms, which were tracked by ability and included the bilingual and the gifted bilingual classroom. The consent form return rate was 83%. From the students who returned consent forms, 32 students were selected stratified by achievement and gender. The sample consisted of equal numbers of male and female students. With regard to reading scores, 50% of the students were at or above grade level, 19% students were 1 year below grade level in reading, 25% were two or more years below, and the remaining two students did not have test scores. Of the eight students who were two or more years below grade level, four of those students were in the bilingual program. Nine students (28%) were born in Mexico and 23 (72%) were U.S. born. All of the students had Mexican-born parents with an average of 5 years of schooling.

## 24.8   School Sites

The goal of the SLP was to track the experiences of "average" youth attending "average" city high schools. The South Side school site, Brookside High School, is a vocational "magnet" school, but not perceived as very selective. When this cohort of students started at this school, major reforms were in place such as a uniform requirement and block scheduling. These reform efforts were focused on promoting more personalized teaching and learning experiences for students. The high school had been geared in the past toward preparing students for manufacturing work. The demographics of Brookside students were the following: 56% low income, 39% of students in 10th grade met or exceeded state goals for reading and 30% for math. The dropout rate at this school was 39%. Racially, the student population was 100% Black, with the majority of teachers being white. The elementary school (K-8) that students attended prior to Brookside also served a 100% Black student population. Eighty-five percent of students at the South Side

elementary school were considered low-income. In contrast to the high school, the teachers were mostly African American and provided an Afrocentric focus at the school.

The second school site used for this analysis was West Side Elementary and Zapata High School pair. Both West Side Elementary and Zapata High School were predominately Mexican schools (99.6% and 98.6% respectively) in one of the city's largest immigrant port-of-entry neighborhoods. Zapata High School opened its doors in 1977, after a community struggle demanding a high school. Zapata is an ethnically/racially segregated school with a 98.6% Latinx population. These demographics remained unchanged since the school opened in 1977 (Hernández 2002). The teacher ethnic/racial background did not reflect the student population, as most teachers were White, non-Latinx. The majority of the students were considered low income (87.6%). In addition, 28% of students at the school were considered Limited English Proficient (LEP) compared to a 6.7% city average. Zapata experienced persistent overcrowding issues and a drop out problem, ranging from 55% to 63% (Hernández 2002). The school also experienced persistent performance problems with less than 40% of students meeting or exceeding state standards in reading and math. The elementary school students attended (K-8) was predominately Latinx (99.6%), and 47% students were considered LEP. Among the students not considered LEP, 68% were meeting or exceeding state goals for reading and 79% were meeting or exceeding state goals for math, well above city averages.

## 24.9    Data Collection and Analysis

A series of nine semi-structured interviews of 1–2 h in length were the main data source. The interviews addressed teacher relationships, school engagement, goals, coping, and questions related to race, gender, and ethnicity. The interviews began in the spring of eighth grade in 1995

and ended in the spring of tenth grade. An interview was conducted approximately every 3 months. The interviewers for this study consisted of one African American female who was primarily responsible for the interviews at Brookside High, a Mexican American female (this author) who was primarily responsible for the interviews at Zapata High, and a white male, a white female, and a Mexican American male who supported the lead interviewers. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and either in the school setting or in a setting comfortable for the student including their home, a library, or café. Throughout the data collection, the research team and a research group was used to debrief the interviews, analysis, and continued data collection.

## 24.10    Interview Description

The SLP team chose an interview protocol development process that employed a grounded theory based design (Glaser and Strauss 1967) guided by the student engagement framework which emphasizes fostering student engagement through inviting students' input, providing direction and support, and providing a challenging experience (Newmann et al. 1992). In a longitudinal study, allowing data to inform and evolve theory and subsequent research questions entails flexibility in the research protocol design (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Each interview contained a series of main questions, probes, and follow-up questions. Interviews targeted issues in the following areas: perception of support and relationships with teachers and other adults; peer networks; challenge, engagement, and support in and out of school; and perceptions their identities, opportunities, and larger political context related to gender, race, and ethnicity. For this chapter, Interview 7 (Fall of 10th grade) was the particular focus of analysis. This interview focused on school and community activities. See Table 24.1 for list of questions.

**Table 24.1** Fall tenth grade interview questions

| School and community activities |
| --- |
| Are you involved in any sports or clubs this year? |
| *How did you get involved? *What is the coach/director like? *How long do you plan to be in this? *Do you plan to join any other activities? *How much time does it take? |
| Did you every try to get involved in anything or do you wish that you were involved in a particular activity? |
| *What was/is it? *What happened that it fell through? *Do you plan to join any other activities? |
| What would you do if a teacher approached you personally and asked you to join an activity? |
| *How about if another student approached you instead? *Has anyone ever done this? |
| What makes a club or other activity really sucessful (work really well)? |
| *The coach/director? *The people who join? *Do the teachers try to keep students involved? |
| Could you imagine yourself doing some activities in the community like doing church work, helping to build houses, working with kids, or doing other volunteer work? |
| *What kinds of things would you like to do? Why? *Would you rather participate in activities in the community or at school? Why? |
| Have you done activiites or volunteer work in the community before? What? |
| *How did you get involved? *What did you like/not like about working in the community? |
| What do you think about the CPS requiring students to do activities at school or in the community? Do you think it's a good idea? |
| *Why/why not? *How will this change things at this school? *Do you think anything would have been different last year if you had been involved in an activity? |
| If you had your choice, would you play in a sport, be in club, or combine both? |
| *What about the rest of the students at this school? Would most prefer sports or club? |
| What do you think are some of the barriers that prevent students from joining activities? |
| Activity |
| Activity Sheet – list of activities of what the students is doing, would like to do and thoughts about school activities |

## 24.11 Analysis

Burawoy (1998) states that all research and theory development occurs within a context. Thus, the first step in this analysis was to develop an understanding of the local community and demographic context (Villarreal Sosa 2011). Next, I used a combination of the Query tool in NVivo followed by reading through each interview transcript in order identify the extent to which students in the study participated in sports or other leisure activities as well as their level of engagement with school. This coding process, a commonly accepted procedure across qualitative methods, was used to identify categories and themes (Creswell 1998). I used the comparative method, comparing themes and categories across cases and with existing theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This iterative, inductive/deductive approach to coding was used until coding saturation occurred (Padgett 1998). As the codes were developed throughout this process, already coded interviews were re-coded using the modified coding scheme. Several established methods were used to enhance rigor and credibility, including audit trails, an evolving design, critical case analyses, and use of multiple data sources (Creswell 1998; Shek et al. 2005). Patterns as well as questions that arose from student transcripts were noted in memos. I then constructed case studies of students representing these varied experiences.

## 24.12 Results

### 24.12.1 Patterns of Participation

Several patterns were noted among the sample in regards to sports and leisure activity participation. Table 24.2 provides a summary of how many students were in each category of participa-

**Table 24.2** Sports and leisure activities participation

| Participation | Brookside (n = 28) | Zapata (n = 30) | Total (n = 58) |
|---|---|---|---|
| None, difficult to Engage | 7 (25%) | 1 (3.3%) | 8 (13.8%) |
| None, potentially Engaged | 6 (21.4) | 19 (63.3%) | 25 (43.1%) |
| **"None" total** | **13 (46.4%)** | **20 (66.6%)** | **33 (56.9%)** |
| Later involvement | 2 (7.1%) | 5 (16.7%) | 7 (12.1%) |
| Initial Involvement only | 6 (21.4) | 0 (0%) | 6 (10.3%) |
| Community only | 3 (10.7) | 2 (6.7%) | 5 (8.6%) |
| Consistently engaged | 4 (14.3) | 3 (10%) | 7 (12.1%) |

tion. Students in the first category, "*None, Difficult to Engage*" were not involved in sports or leisure activities at school or in the community. They were considered "difficult to engage" because this group of students made very critical statements of their schools and were not interested in participating in the community. Students in this category made statements such as: "I don't want to be on nothing at this school" (Chante, I7) and "Well me, with activities, I just don't want to do them." (Keisha, I8). The next category, "*None, potentially engaged*" were students who were not involved in activities at school or in the community, but who expressed positive views of school and were not involved due to stated barriers such as missing tryouts, lack of opportunities, or being unsure about how to get involved. As noted in Table 24.2, most (66.6%) of Zapata students did not participate in sports or leisure activities at school or in the community. However, compared to Brookside, most of the Zapata students had positive views of their school and seemed eager to engage in sports or clubs given the opportunity or proper guidance. In addition, a larger percentage of Zapata students were not involved in leisure or sports activities in high school (66.6%) compared to Brookside (46.4%). The students at Zapata stated additional barriers such as lack of sports or activities and a late dismissal time

(5:30 p.m.), making participation more challenging. There were a few students at each school site, seven total (12.1%), who became involved in school activities later in their high school careers and remained involved. Typically this was due to switching schools or because a friend or teacher invited them to participate. At Brookside, there were six students who started high school involved in sports, but later quit. They did not persist due to conflicts with the coach, other students involved, or because they struggled keeping up with their grades. There were no students in this category at Zapata High School. There were five students who were involved in leisure activities in the community, but not at school. For the students at Zapata High, this was a soccer or baseball team in the community. For the students at Brookside, this was typically a church activity such as the choir. Finally, there were a total of seven students who started high school engaged in sports or other leisure activities and remained involved throughout the time of the interviews. The next section will explore several case studies that provide insight into the questions about the role of sports and leisure activities in their social identities, academic trajectories, and quality of life. These patterns highlight the need to look at how schools function as an external quality of life factor, providing or limiting opportunities for engagement and the way in which participation in sports and leisure activities in school or community can enhance quality of life through students' contribution to others and their school community as well as promoting pro-social behavior.

## 24.13 Student Cases

### "I don't want to be on nothing at this school!"

Chante articulated a desire to be a lawyer in 8th grade. She is positive about going to Brookside High School and states that she has thought about going there since she was in 6th grade. She is also quite focused on her goals to go college:

I: Do you think about what you have to do to get there and stuff?

Chante: Yes.

I: Like what do you think about?

Chante: Alright, you have to work hard and go to college, stay in college as long as you, well, stay in college as long as you can, graduate from college. You know, get into law school.

Chante identifies as African American and states that she enjoys learning about African American history in class and appreciates her teachers talking about history. She states that one of her teachers will regularly discuss the reasons that students should be proud and happy to be Black.

By the end of her first year in high school (I5), she was very unsure of her future and avoided any discussions by answering with "*I don't know*." Her goal becomes to "*get to the next grade*" and no longer mentions college or being a lawyer. When asked about her school in 9th grade, she stated "*I ain't gonna get in nothing in this school*." The interviewer asks, "*Nothing. How come*?" She states, "*I don't know. This is my last year here anyway*." She goes from a 2.69 GPA in 8th grade to failing in high school with a GPA ranging from 0.5 to 1. The transition to high school is difficult and she experiences a similar pattern to other students in the sense that teacher relationships change dramatically. When asked about why she doesn't like her teachers as much as her elementary school teachers, she states, "*And like my algebra teacher, I be askin' her questions and she acts like she don't want to help nobody so I say forget it*" (I3). By the end of 9th grade (I5), when asked about whether any teachers know her well she states, "*None of them…. None of them don't. Uh uh. None of these teachers. Most of these teachers don't even know me*." Teacher relationships are critical to how students experience their school environments, and for students of color, can be sources of support or experiences of judgment and stereotypes (Villarreal Sosa 2011). Chante's response to "not care" is a way to cope with the identity threat and stereotypes invoked by the teachers' perceived lack of care or support. Students do not make an artificial separation between their social identities and school (Valenzuela 1999; Villarreal Sosa 2011). In addition, both of these comments can provide some insight into Chante's own perceptions of quality of life. She perceives minimal relational goods and begins to have a limited view of her own future (Rojas 2009).

The question that arose as I was reading through her transcripts was the connection between engagement in school and participation in leisure activities or sports. Chante, in 8th grade, expressed an interest in basketball and was involved in her church choir. By high school, she had quit the choir saying she was not "*into it*" and expressed no interest in participating in school-sponsored activities. Chante's case can be particularly illuminating raising some important questions about how can we create opportunities for engagement in sports or leisure activities when students have reached such a level of disdain or rejection of their school environments. Badura et al. (2016) find that participation in organized leisure activities is linked to better school performance and attachment, thus increasing student perception of quality of life. However, how do we a social workers, educators, and policy makers address the needs of a student Chante? As Rojas (2009) and Susniene and Jurkauskas (2009) state, quality of life is a multidimensional concept that should be considering when thinking about public policy response. As subsequent case studies will demonstrate, participation in sports or leisure activities required an already existing sense of engagement or attachment to their school or community environments. Could it be that the role that these sports or leisure activities play for students is more akin to an insurance policy? In other words, does participation in sports and leisure assist students as they transition to high school in order to maintain their engagement and weather some of the challenges they may face? Lee et al. (2012) state that "sport programs, practices and policies need to be properly designed and developed to harness the power of sport as a contributor to society…" (p.38). Thus, what is the role and potential response for students like Chante? Can sports or leisure activities still have an impact on quality of life? If so, how?

## "Yeah, sports, I want to get involved!"

Oscar was a student who was doing well toward the end of eighth grade and viewed himself as an athlete. His involvement in basketball was a major source of motivation for keeping his grades up. Oscar was excited about high school, and athletics were a core part of that excitement. When asked about why he selected Zapata High School, he stated: "*Zapata? Um, because the basketball sports. I love sports. They saw me play before, like, they say I'm a good athlete, that's why they want me there. So that's why I choose to go there*" (I1).

However, this status was precarious; he had a history of academic ups and downs and was externally motivated by the threat of not graduating or not playing basketball if he did not keep his grades up. By the end of eighth grade, he was developing a sense of satisfaction with his own success, fueling his motivation. His eighth grade reading and social science teacher commented:

Oscar is one of the students I am most proud of. His first 2½ quarters were pretty rough. He didn't do much homework and his effort was greatly lacking. Also, when he saw positive results of his work early on, he fed off that and then genuinely wanted to do well. I noticed a thirst for knowledge that had been missing. After D's the first 2–3 quarters he earned an A in Reading and Social Studies 4th quarter. He also jumped 18 months on his Iowa scores from 7.4 to 9.2 in reading.

Over the transition to high school, Oscar experienced a downward academic trajectory and was frequently suspended from school. Oscar experienced a time period of intense identification with a gang, but later distanced himself from the gang. Not having involvement in a sport, which was such an important part of his school identity, made him more vulnerable as he was forced to deal with being harassed and beaten up on the street. During the transition to high school, Oscar was beaten up twice and chose not to fight back, hoping to avoid further retaliation or association with a gang. He continued to fear getting jumped on his way to school and eventually, he joined the gang. Thus it could be said that external factors impacting outer quality of life were a major factor in Oscar's experience. He did not have a basic sense of safety in his neighborhood, and this has an impact on his school experiences and quality

of life. When individuals do not feel safe, it is difficult for them to have positive appraisals of other social institutions or organizations (Susniene and Jurkauskas 2009).

Similar to Chante, as Oscar transitioned to high school; the large, impersonal nature of a comprehensive high school in a working class/low-income minority neighborhood made the development of relationships with teachers very difficult. While he perceived eighth grade teachers as taking the time to get to know him, he felt that the high school teachers made negative assumptions about him and treated them according to those assumptions. Perhaps involvement in sports might have changed some of the assumptions teachers made about him and help him to navigate an environment with multiple gangs.

There were several themes reflected in Oscar's interviews that were represented among other students as well. Primarily, that the lack of participation for many students was due to structural or institutional barriers. Students who were not involved in sports or leisure activities expressed a desire to participate, but often could not due to the late dismissal time combined with fear of violence in the community. Due to the late dismissal time, students did not feel safe staying any later in order to participate in school activities. Other structural barriers included the lack of opportunities for participation. Oscar mentioned that Zapata did not have a football team. In addition, he mentions the lack of advertisement about when tryouts would be or uncertainty about how to join. Many students who did not participate in sports or other activities stated that they had missed tryouts. When asked what the school could do, Oscar states: "*Put like signs around school. I haven't seen one sign about basketball. I've had to be asking for a long time about basketball*" (I7). For students who wanted to get involved in sports or activities in the community, particularly when school was not in session, there were few opportunities, especially in the community. Finally, the main obstacle in Oscar's case was the requirement that students have a certain GPA in order to play sports. This was an unfortunate dilemma because Oscar also discussed the way in which sports motivated him to improve or

maintain his grades. Thus, Oscar did not have access to the one motivator and support that helped him to improve his grades.

> Oscar: I was a good student then, too, only reason I was a good student, 'cause I used to play basketball, and in the beginning of the year I didn't care, you know, but the teacher took me aside saying, a teacher and my coach too, they told me that "If you don't get good grades you can't be on our team." And after that it just clicked and I started doing my homework and I had good grades… and when I got to high school, I wanted to join sports too but I didn't have good grades, you know, and I couldn't get good grades…

> After Oscar's first year, he remains optimistic and wants to try out for sports again in his second year. By the end of 10th grade, he is feeling less engaged in school and expresses a desire to no longer go to high school (I9).

> I:    So would you say that you like school more or less now, at this point?
> Oscar: Less.
> I:    Um, so when we talked about um, I don't know if you remember the first Interview, we talked about actually choosing a high school, and if you could do that whole process all over again, do you think you would have chosen a different high school?
> Oscar: Yeah, I wouldn't even... I don't want to go to high school. It's four years, I don't want to... Just allow me to get my GED, early, you know, I'm already seventeen
> I:    Just want to give up on the whole thing.
> Oscar: Get my GED, get it over with, and go to college, and hopefully there's some sort of team that I could join.

There are missed opportunities with Oscar to offer him opportunities for engagement and for the development of relationships with teachers. Offering Oscar opportunities for involvement in sports could have made a significant difference for Oscar as he navigated gang involvement, his academic identity and motivation, and the perceptions teachers had of him. Outer quality of life factors such as neighborhood violence or lack of opportunities for sports or leisure participation in the school setting had an interactive effect with Oscar's appraisals of himself and his future as well as the school as an organization. Holistic and multi-dimensional policy responses would account for inner and outer quality of life factors that shape students' appraisals and lived experi-

ences. With opportunities for engagement as well as accessing relational goods, Oscar's quality of life would be positively impacted, as this could foster positive appraisals of himself as a student and of his future opportunities and contributions to society.

### *"Since I got into band, I figure I'll stay"*

Students who joined activities later in high school tend to be average students in performance. They also have somewhat tentative academic identities with ups and downs in their grades and engagement. In many ways, they are similar to the students who have no participation. However, these students encounter an opportunity where they join a sports or leisure activity. For most of the students in this group, joining an activity or sport occurred as a result of encouragement from a friend who was already in that activity, a teacher, or as a result of new opportunities after a transfer to a new school.

Nikita is one such student who joins band later in her second year of high school at Brookside. Nikita's baseline GPA is a 1.5, but graduates from high school with a 3.0. However, her academic trajectory is fragile and she has many moments that she begins to disengage from school through frequent absences. While she doesn't speak about band with excitement, it is just enough to help her feel more connected and positive about her school as well as improve her attendance. There are two moments in particular where she discusses her dislike for her school. In previous interviews, she stated that she wants to change schools. After joining band, she states, "*I wanna change schools, but since I got into band, I'll just stay*" (I8). Nikita also missed classes often, which impacted her grades. Joining band changed this behavior as well. When asked about her unexcused absences to class, she states: "*One reason I go is because I got into band practice and I'm going to be here until 6 o'clock, so it don't make no sense for me to cut*" (I8). Nikita does complete high school and remains in band. All of the students in this category go on to complete high school as well. Given how precarious academic persistence is for so many of these

students, simple participation in some form of sport or leisure activity in the school context may be one factor in supporting their continued attendance and eventual completion of high school. In Nikita's case we can see how her participation in band changed her perceptions, although slightly, of her school environment, increasing her attendance and ultimately graduating from high school. Again, there is a dynamic relationship between inner and outer quality of life factors, with opportunities for participation in band changing a student's subjective appraisal of her school environment and later impacting her subjective appraisal of her future. Very concretely, this activity contributes to her ability to graduate from high school, directly impacting an outer quality of life factor; her ability to earn more income as a high school graduate compared to those who do not have a high school diploma.

Nikita identifies as Black, and not African American. She states that she does not know enough about what African American means. Nikita embraces the paradox of her community and school, regularly discussing both issues of race and class both at home and at school. Part of what she is learning at home is "what white people are saying and that it's wrong" (I1). She does not believe that Blacks have control over what happens to them in the U.S., in part due to a lack of political participation. While she does not discuss the school context in a direct racialized manner, when asked what could be better about her school, she states, "*Let the teachers and stuff work together with the students instead of trying to always expel them*" (I9), reflecting her awareness of some of the dynamics in a school setting for students of color. In her case, her mother has equipped her well for understanding and navigating these dynamics.

### "I stopped going cuz I didn't like the people."

This group of students started high school participating in a sport or leisure activity. However, they do not continue participate beyond the second year of high school. Like other students in this category, Eddie starts off fairly strong in 8th grade with 3.0 GPA. However, the transition is

difficult and his academic work declines. By 11th grade, Eddie has 0.25 GPA and does not go on to 12th grade. None of the students in this group are completers of high school. The reason for no longer participating is centered on three themes, either they leave the sport or activity because they have a conflict with other peers in the team or club, perceive unfairness from the coach, or state that they have no time to participate. Here Eddie explains why he quit football:

'Cause, um, I stopped goin' to practice 'cause I didn't like the, uh, you know, 'cause, like people had been goin' to practice, tryin' out for weeks and weeks, he would say, all right, cause he had to get some more equipment, you know, shoulder pads and all that. He'd say, I'll get the equipment next week. I'll get y'all equipment. Then some more people come and try out. They probably only been there for like five days and they get their equipment in front of people that been there for, like, you know two or three weeks. I just stopped goin' to fall practice (I3).

This type of response is an adaptive strategy, particularly for males of color, in order to maintain self-dignity (DaCosta 2002); however, is counterproductive in the long run. Eddie may have been employing this strategy in his classroom contexts as well. His 9th grade teacher assessments were discordant and all saw him differently, from believing he would likely drop out of high school to believing there was no chance he would drop out. He was seen by one teacher as "motivated," by another as "lazy," and by a third as "obstinate." Eddie comes to view himself as "lazy," using that as an explanation for his course failures and frequent absences or tardies to class. When asked about his racial identity, Eddie states that it is important to learn about his heritage or culture, but does not believe that racism is a problem. He states dominant rhetoric about "getting a job if you look for one" and that there are poor whites just like there are poor blacks. This was reflective of Eddie's difficulty with acknowledging paradoxes, both in the social context for African Americans in his neighborhood as well as his own academic performance. Eddie continued to maintain during the interviews that he was on the road to "improving" and passing his class this time around. In Eddie's case, the primary

quality of life factor that stands out is the lack of access to relational goods in the form of adult relationships that believe in him or support his continued success in school. His self appraisals become negative, viewing himself as "lazy" while maintaining unrealistic expectations about his potential graduation from high school given his failing grades.

### "If you don't have good grades, you can't go out and play soccer."

Mike is among the five students who were not involved in leisure activities or sports at school, but participated in the community. Mike was in the gifted program at West Side elementary and continued to do well in high school. He was not very different academically than other students in that his reading was nearly at grade level (7.7) and math was almost 2 years above grade level (9.8). Mike was born in the U.S., but spent much of his elementary school years in Mexico. Thus, he was perceived as an immigrant although he was a second-generation youth. For Mike, his immigrant identity provided him some protection from both peer harassment and the school's unconscious or conscious categorization and negative stereotyping of Latinx males. For example, Mike was a quiet student; but for him, this was seen as a sign of being polite and engaged in school. Mike is described by a teacher as "polite and mature." However, Oscar, who is a second generation student and perceived as such, attempts the same strategy of being quiet in school; but the same behavior is perceived as defiance or disengagement by teachers.

This immigrant identity provided Mike with alternative networks in the community. For example, Mike was on a soccer team with other immigrant young men in the community. This also helped to keep him busy and provide him with other social outlets outside of school. Mike spent weekends and many evenings at soccer practice or games. In addition, soccer was a leisure activity enjoyed by the entire family watching games at home together or family outings to his soccer games in the community. Mike states that soccer helped him because "*if you don't have*

*good grades, you can't go out and play soccer*" (I7) and went on to tell the story of a game where all the youth who were in school had to sit out of the game if they did not have good grades. Even though this activity was in the community, the coach was very invested in making sure the youth who played on the team were doing well in school. Mike did not have close connections with adults at school, but nevertheless graduated and did well academically. In fact, this isolation from other peers and the school environment in general helped to buffer him from the negative stereotypes that other Latinx boys faced.

Mike's case shows that students can be agents in making choices about social identity and responding to a context that devalue their identity. A borderlands identity means an ability to cross borders and inhabit "middle spaces" (Bejarano 2005). It makes sense that students often created their own social identities, sometimes not following the social construction of "U.S. citizen vs. immigrant." It may be more useful in the future to categorize students by social identity that incorporates their own meanings rather than an imposed category such as place of birth or generational status. Furthermore, participation and connection to sports or leisure activities in the community provide another outlet for connection and adult relationships when it may not be possible to experience this at school. Thus as Mike constructed his own borderlands identity, he was also constructing a more positive view of himself and his quality of life. While the school did not provide adequate relational goods or other opportunities, he had other relationships in the community that supported his academic progress.

### "If students were involved in outside activities…a lot of things would change"

What stood out the most about Janette was how successful she seemed to be compared to other students. She was an accomplished athlete and was selected as the Softball Team Captain, was making progress toward graduation, and had plans of attending college. She was so successful in navigating her peer and teacher relationships

that it was easy to forget the extent of her gang involvement, family problems, the losses she experienced, her struggles with self-esteem, and her academic difficulties. I was struck by the final interview where I naively asked her "what she had most struggled with" in high school, and she responds "everything…" (I9).

Janette was unsure about how her transition to high school would go. Janette had a D average in 5th – 7th grades and described herself as someone who "got into trouble a lot" (I1). In 8th grade, she had raised her GPA to a 2.75 and was hopeful that she would continue to do well. Her standardized test scores are 8.4 in reading and 7.5 in math in 8th grade, thus she is at grade level. As she transitions to high school she states that she is less focused because of the losses she has experienced, one male friend each year due to gang shootings. In 10th grade, Janette loses a close friend, Alex due to a gunshot. Again, she shows incredible resilience as she uses Alex's death as another reason to continue to work hard:

> And since now that, that you know, that, that Alex rests in peace you know, he's not with me you know, I have like, everything that I'm gonna do is gonna be for him, you know, it's like he's gonna be in everything. If I pass all my classes you know, I'll always think about him…(I9).

Due to a history of poor academic performance, Janette struggled with her perception of her academic ability. Due to the tracking system, she was in "level 7," which she described as the lowest group in the school. Despite the perception of other groups in the school as "smarter," Janette was determined to improve her standardized test scores. This is the first glimpse at Janette's typical proactive response to difficult situations. It is also notable that her test scores are similar to other students placed in honors classes in high school while she was placed in a lower track, thus revealing that teacher perceptions may make a difference in how students are perceived academically.

Janette's perception of her academic ability is not just a reflection of her personal achievement and experiences, but it also influenced by her group identity. In this case, it is her group identity as a Zapata student. In the last interview (I9), she describes a Saturday college prep program she attends and states that other students are smart in contrast to herself and other students from Zapata, saying,

> "I don't feel comfortable being their cause a lot of intelligent kids go there. A lot of them. A lot of them are in the honor society and I haven't gotten there yet…They ask us from Zapata and we just stay quiet…and they ask them and they …explain everything… They are very intelligent.

Janette shows amazing resourcefulness and self-acceptance. Despite perceiving the other students in the program from different schools as "smarter," she says:

> "I wish I could be like them but I know the only way I could be is myself and I do okay being myself…They are intelligent. That's why it's good, so I can learn from them and they could teach me some of the things they know. That's why I'm still in it (I9)."

What is striking in this case, is how Janette's academic identity can change from viewing herself as a "D" student to someone that can begin to have more confidence in her ability. Her involvement in sports has a major role in both her own transformation and the transformation in how teachers view her social identity.

Janette begins high school committed to joining sports or clubs. Her goal for her first year of high school is to earn her credits and be in "more activities than I used to be" (I1). In high school, she was involved in many clubs as well as the softball team, and part of a student group advocating for a girls basketball team. She was involved in a club called "Poder" [power], a college preparation weekend program; and a community based informal dance group. Certainly, sports gave Janette both motivation to do well in school as well as self confidence. In ninth grade, her grades had begun to decline and immediately, the coach talked to her about her grades in a way that made her feel valued, "*I wasn't passing my classes and he was like 'just do your best and pass it so that you can keep playing with us because we need you'*" (I5). Her involvement in sports also helped her cope with school when she became "bored."

Well, it's better than grammar school, but without sports it would be boring. You would think like, I don't want to be here because it's too long. But once you get the chance to be outside and play with your teammates and everything, it gets easy (I5).

What is reflected in the above quote and other statements is the importance of her peer relationships as well. In other comment she states, "*I didn't expect to be on a team and have all of these friends*" (I5). Janette also feels challenged by softball and describes her coach as supportive. Janette believes that if more students were involved in activities, no matter how small, it would help them learn that "*they could do it*" and they would be "*all into the school*" and "*proud of this school*" (I7).

Janette also navigates her social identity in a way that acknowledges the complexities and dualities of Mexican identity. Both of Janette's parents are legal permanent residents, while Janette and her sisters were all born in the U.S. Janette's first language was Spanish and she was placed in the bilingual program at her school from Kindergarten through 5th grade. When I began interviewing Janette, her parents had already been divorced for about 2 years. For Mrs. Ochoa, not becoming a U.S. citizen is an act of resistance toward the racism she has experienced in the United States. Given Mrs. Ochoa's consciousness about the anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. and her efforts to foster pride and deep connections with Mexican culture in her daughters, it is easy to see how Janette learned some lessons that help her manage some of the barriers and difficulties that she encounters. The way in which Janette describes her struggle to define herself in relation to her Mexican heritage shows that she had learned to be comfortable with ambiguity and a changing identity based on the context:

> It's like just because, I'm over here, it's like I feel like I'm a Mexican and I see everybody different, you know, the Americans. And when I go to, to Mexico, it's like people look at me like I'm an American (I7).

Janette brilliantly displays how she draws from her cultural strengths in order to manage a potentially oppressive situation to one in which she survives and at times, even thrives. She completes her 9th grade year with saying that her teachers will remember both her athletic talent and how hard she worked in their classes (I9). It is her involvement in sports that help her navigate these teacher perceptions of her in class as well as her own negotiation of academic identity. In this case study, several quality of life factors are at play. Janette's case describes the importance of feeling that one makes a contribution to others, and in turn the way this impacts her ability to persist in school and her own self appraisals (Rojas 2009). Relational goods in the form of both adult relationships and peer relationships are important for her and contribute to her positive views of her school and community. For students of color, there is an additional form of a good not discussed in the quality of life literature, and that is her navigational capital and her ability to manage experiences of racism or discrimination.

## 24.14  Implications and Conclusion

Gaps in educational opportunities and outcomes are greater between racial and socioeconomic groups than they were 25 years ago (Gándara and Contreras 2009; Zhao 2016). Precisely at time when the diversity of nation's schools grows, the focus is on standardized test scores and two basic subject areas as the primary measure of school quality and success, which has muted voices calling for a more humanizing school environment (Ravitch 2010). While the Every Student Succeeds Act passed in 2015 mentions holistic education, it is unlikely, especially given the new Trump administration and their emphasis on dismantling federal agencies and public education, that this will translate into more opportunities for students in predominately minority and low income schools to participate in sports or leisure activities. However, it is important to build our body of knowledge about the ways in which sports and leisure activities, when available, can make a difference for students of color facing multiple complexities in their neighborhoods, social context, and personal lives. This body of knowledge can be used as we advocate for policy

changes that promote school based and community opportunities for sports and leisure. Students from urban and minority communities have the greatest need to participate in sports and leisure activities, but the least resources and supports to do so (Basch 2011). This becomes an important part of the "outer" factors contributing to quality of life (Rojas 2009). Students need opportunities for participation in activities that provide them with relationships with other peers and adults, the development of pro-social skills, positive appraisals of their school environments, and their own self-appraisals and perceptions of their future (Rojas 2009; Susniene and Jurkauskas 2009). Ultimately, these opportunities for participation in sports or leisure can also impact their quality of life through positively impacting the likelihood that they persist and graduate from school.

Consistent with the literature on physical activity and urban minority youth, (e.g. Basch 2011; Bird et al. 2013) these student narratives demonstrate that very few students participated consistently in organized sports or leisure activities at school or in the community. However, for those few who did, sports and leisure activities often helped them to navigate their school environments; providing an additional tool in coping with negative stereotypes or school environments that were potentially disempowering. While the literature demonstrates a link between school achievement and school performance (e.g. Badura et al. 2016; Bartko and Eccles 2003; Bradley et al. 2013), the studies are primarily quantitative and do not provide additional insight into the dynamic that leads to better school achievement, mental health, and pro-social behavior for those youth involved in organized leisure activities. Students in this study reported positive relationships with peers and coaches, opportunities for challenge and support, feeling valued and competent, and feeling engaged when playing sports or other activities such as band or dance. Thus, what emerges is much more nuanced understanding of the role that sports and leisure plays in the lived experience of urban youth of color and their subjective experiences of quality of life. It is also possible to see the way in which

their academic identities are transformed or maintained as a result of their participation in sports.

For the majority of youth, those not involved in sports or leisure activities in school or the community, it is important to consider effective strategies to increase their involvement in sports or leisure activities. This could include the availability of sports or leisure opportunities that are offered at the school, but without the same formality as a sports team requiring tryouts and a certain GPA in order to join. In addition, it is important create school environments that foster youth participation by having available space, equipment, supervision, and the needed outreach to generate interest. Community and schools need to offer programs for adolescent development that provide activities with opportunities for active participation and challenges that can lead to a sense of accomplishment, are youth centered, and most importantly; have consideration for the realities of students' lives and contexts by offering the flexibility to respond to the unpredictable nature of their lives. Educational policy must seriously consider the importance of sports and leisure in their wider policy initiatives.

What is also clear is that the youth in this study are not oppositional toward American standards of success nor are they largely optimistic. Instead, they show a great deal of ambivalence and thus, tells us that we need to move toward consideration of effective ways of working with these youth given their complex social identities and coping strategies (DaCosta 2002). Studies on social identity and sports and leisure need to consider racial and class identities instead of limiting analysis to group identity with their sports teams (e.g. Bruner et al. 2015). Furthermore, as Oleś (2015) states, when considering subjective experiences of quality of life especially in adolescence, it's imperative to consider how stage of identity development impacts that subjective experience of quality of life. I would argue that for youth of color, one must not only consider personal identity development, but also their social identity or stigmatized group identities and how they make sense of this identity given the

social and cultural contexts that impact their subjective experiences of quality of life. From this study, we see that there is a complex relationship between how students see themselves academically, their understanding of their racial identities and social position, and the ways in which participation in sports or leisure shape these experiences and quality of life in their school contexts. Students who are better able to navigate these contextually based social identities, teacher perceptions and stereotypes, and peer relationships can feel more connected and positive about their school environment and likelihood for success. Janette is a good example of a student who embraces her Mexican identity despite the hostile, anti-immigrant climate, and is able to transform her academic identity from someone who "gets into trouble" and is "not smart" to someone who is feels confident in her ability, can persist even when she experiences challenges, and feels connected to her school environment. One could say that she defines her quality of life as quite good despite the many barriers and challenges she faced.

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# Final Remarks

# 25

Lía Rodriguez de la Vega and Walter N. Toscano

**Abstract**

The chapters in this book reflect the contributions made by authors representing different disciplines and perspectives. This contributions provide valuable insights for exploring future directions of the subjects covered in the book. Below we offer a brief summary of such directions.

## 25.1 Part I Leisure and Recreation

As stated by Sirgy, Uysaland and Kruger, leisure scholars argue that participation in leisure activities serves as a medium for personal enhancement and self-development. In his work on "serious leisure", Stebbins (2015) classified leisure activities into three forms of leisure: serious (amateurism, hobbyism, and serious volunteering and devotee work), casual, and project-based leisure. In this vein, it is worth exploring the issue of leisure well-being derived from satisfaction of growth needs in different cultural matrixes (taking into account the data provided by Inoguchiin his chapter), such as that of India, where the virtue of *dana* (giving) establishes different self-projection and relational logics. In such connection, the cultural semantics of seva (service) can also be associated with leisure and even provide a framework for exploring cybernetic dynamics of the subject (Handy et al. 2011).

Along these lines, the study of altruism and its association with leisure and spatial dynamics—through the analysis of diasporic networks and their philanthropic activities carried out for the benefit of the countries of origin—offers another rich field for exploration.

Tourism has become a topic of interest in leisure studies. In this regard, it is worth noting the study of pilgrimages and tourism conducted by Singh (2005, 2006), in which he draws on a specific case to suggest that modern tourism offers some theological manifestations through the notion of geopiety (defined by John Kirtland Wright as "the belief and worship of powers behind nature or the human environment"). This provides a basis for further research into leisure and well-being in association with this notion comprising the spatial and religious components.

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Mustonen (2006) examines pilgrimage and voluntary tourism—another area that may be of interest—and points out that "the convergence of traditional pilgrimage towards leisure tourism and the birth of volunteer tourism represent the blend of premodern and postmodern".

All of these subjects also offer the possibility of exploring the issue of language and the task of documenting semantic and narrative networks associated with leisure and recreation in different places and cultures. Here it is worth mentioning Richard's assertion (2002) that giving a name to something entails cutting out and modelling a category of intelligibility. The question then arises: Could such language be considered as part of well-being itself?

With respect to children's leisure and well-being, Rees highlights the political impact of data as he states that "[i]n terms of practical implications, the findings on associations between structural (household and local area) factors and leisure activities, and between leisure activities and subjective well-being, suggest that actions to improve equality of access to a range of leisure activities could lead to enhancements in children's quality of life and experiences of childhood". This lends support to our position about the need for a more robustand sustained synergy between academia and public management. Along the same lines, the author stresses the importance of a thorough understanding of the contextual factors of each country studied for a more accurate analysis of the data obtained. In addition, Rees' findings on the variations in the development of reading for fun and the use of new technologies invite discussion about the promotion of a free-time culture, with special focus on creativity and participation, and an exploration of the varieties found in the repertoires of resources of the different cultural matrixes. This once again brings to the fore the issue of management and public policy, and the fact that joint efforts are needed to make recreation and outdoor activities available to all individuals, providing a context of physical and social support for such purpose. What is more, recreation has the potential of addressing social challenges such as sedentary behavior and obesity, reduced contact with nature, the specific threats to the environment and the different inequities limiting the participation of individuals. While tackling such challenges can be seen as an opportunity, this requires common agreed-upon views.

In direct relation to the above questions, Benatuil addresses the issue of non-formal education, recreation and well-being, in association with the transmission of values belonging to a specific cultural matrix. The author highlights the importance of delving into the study of the different social agents involved in the processes identified in the chapter, such as the *Madrichim* (young people who play the role of non-formal educators), the *Rosh Madrich* (coordinator) and the *Chanichim* (the children that attend the activities) and of drawing comparisons between the process of *Hadracha*and similar devices in other religious and cultural groups. The author thus stresses the need to take due account of the different cultural matrixes.

Adams and Savahl, in their exploration of children's recreational engagement with nature and the implications for children's subjective well-being, discuss the conception of the relationship between Nature and Society and the potential directions for the development of an ethics of Nature. The authors also draw attention to issues such as the measurement of relational goods (in this case, the bioethical relationship), friendship, and participation, among others. As is well-known, the concept of relational goods was introduced by Nussbaum (1986), Donati (1986), Gui (1987) and Uhlander (1989) in reference to "human experiences in which the good is the relationship itself", rather than its outcome.

Cefai explores leisure time and community space in connection with children's well-being in Malta. The author concludes by underscoring a critical element that needs to be recognized beyond formal boundaries: the value of listening to what children think and feel about their use of leisure time and spaces and how these affect their quality of life and well-being. At the same time, Cefai argues that children and young people need to be included in the design and provision of such spaces and systems for these to be effective in enhancing their quality of life and well-being.

Haanpää and Ursin address leisure participation and child well-being: the role of family togetherness, in an attempt to establish whether leisure time activity is related to perceived well-being and whether family togetherness mediates this relationship. The authors confirm their model, which supports the use of an ecological system theory and indicates that children's well-being is explained in terms of personal, relational and contextual factors. Their study confirms the findings of the literature existing on the topic, stressing the role of family joint time. Future studies might identify the different types of families involved and the specific features of the time spent by them.

Feldhacker, Cerny, Brockevelt and Lawler argue that children are occupational beings and as such are born with an innate desire to experience learning, control, and mastery. Such intrinsic motivation and ability to engage in daily occupations or activities is what establishes a purpose and its achievement, and contributes to physical and emotional health and well-being. The authors explore children's and young people's occupations and discuss the role of participation in these occupations and its impact on health, development and well-being. The authors conclude that from an early age, the occupations in which children participate and the context in which such participation occurs promote the development of the body structures and functions. Interaction with caretakers and exposure to sensory stimuli help children to understand their world. When participation is supported by affectionate adults and children are protected by safe and positive environments, positive mental health and self-image are enhanced. As the child grows up and participation in different occupations becomes more independent and reflects the child's autonomy and ability for development, the child will relyon his or her past learning in order to satisfy the growing demands of adolescence. Thus, an understanding of the dynamic relationship between the attributes, contexts and work demands placed on children, and how these components impact on a child's growth, mental health and self-image, provides us with both the opportunity and the responsibility to intention-

ally foster well-being throughout the different stages of a child's life, together with specific values associated with work, conceived as an occupation. This idea is in line with our general reflections on the promotion of specific cultures.

Tonon, Mikkelsen, Rodriguez de la Vega and Toscano address the relationship between free time, friends, future and quality of life, among 8 year-old children from the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. They conclude that "improving the quality of life of children, through strengthened education, safety, and the prevention of trauma, can be a crucial part of development; indeed, the quality of childhood is important not only for what happens in childhood but also for future life". The authors' reflections contribute to the idea of fostering a specific culture of free time, while at the same time they stress the importance of community participation and the impact of public management on this issue.

Ramírez, Alfaro, Heine, Easton, Urzúa, Amo, Valdebenito, Rojas, Monrealand Jaramillo examine recreation, free time and well-being according to children and adolescents in Chile, the mediator meanings of satisfaction. Drawing on the reflections of Díaz et al. (2011)—who emphasize the need to contribute to the study of well-being by integrating dimensions that go beyond individual factors and take into account the particular cultural references and meanings that participate in the evaluation and assessment of life satisfaction in light of children's and adolescents' circumstances—the authors explore the subject and conclude that well-being, in its relationship with free time, is mediated by the possibility of feeling free, in contrast to day-to-day duties, in which satisfaction and dissatisfaction are related to the possibility of having personal time, as well as meeting with loved ones, such as family and friends. In addition, the power of seeing new places, having contact with nature and having out-of-the-ordinary experiences are valued (free time is meant as a space that gives the possibility to break the daily routine and opens the expectation of having new experiences, which are relevant for children and adolescents to travel and visit other places). In this regard, the authors put forward an interesting proposal: to carry out a

study of the different types of experiences and their associations with children's and adolescents' well-being. Along these lines, Bhattacharjee and Mogilner (2014) categorize types of experiences and explore the extent to which an experience is ordinary(and frequent) versus extraordinary (and infrequent). Associating such experiences with happiness, the authors find that the relative happiness enjoyed from these situations is dependent on age: younger people, who perceive the future as extensive, obtain more happiness from extraordinary experiences, while ordinary experiences are increasingly connected with happiness as individuals age. Future studies might then focus on the different types of experiences, their particular characteristics, and associated levels of well-being.

The work of López explores the perceptions of the rural young people of Colombia's High Andean Mountain with respect to leisure and the different activities contributing to the enjoyment of what they consider a good life and adequate social well-being. The author's category of "social moratorium" alludes not only to an extension that facilitates the productive integration of rural young people into society, but also to the decision to assume at an early age responsibilities and commitments that in other contexts are typical of adult age. These considerations are useful for exploring in further detail High Andean Mountain young people and their well-being. The author concludes that rural youths at the High Andean Mountains do not perceive leisure as a vital activity of existence but as an experience of a subjective state of freedom, which depends exclusively on themselves, and which is individual and private and does not depend on others. These findings provide insight into future research on the leisure/freedom/well-being relationship, with an emphasis on the impact of the temporal aspect on such relationship.

Capiello and Laurito explore the issue of older adult volunteers' well-being during leisure time. Their work confirms the findings of the existing literature on the subject that volunteer work contributes to successful ageing as it also enhances well-being. The authors stress the importance of creating participative spaces where older adults

can meet and engage in meaningful activities, which can provide them with opportunities to occupy their leisure time. In this regard, future studies can be conducted on the spatial and temporal meanings ascribed by older adults, their way of dealing with losses as they age—and how this is connected with virtues such as altruism—the associations with well-being, etc. By placing special emphasis on different ethnic groups belonging to different cultural matrixes, such studies may not only establish similarities and differences but also help to circulate resources from one context to another if this factor is considered to contribute to more successful ageing.

Closely connected with the above study, the research conducted by Rodríguez-Rodríguez, Rojo-Pérez and Fernández-Mayoral addresses active aging, which, according to the World Health Organization, is based on two key aspects: a positive view of ageing (Mackowicz and Wnek-Gozdek 2016), and a reference to participation in social, economic, cultural and spiritual activities (Sanchis Sánchez et al. 2014) and to a multidimensional matrix of factors (Tam, 2013). Here we underscore once again the issues of "serious leisure", active ageing and quality of life as some of the future directions for further exploration.

Gordziejczuk and Mikkelsen explore the relationship between leisure space and quality of life from a territorial point of view. The authors raise new questions related to this line of enquiry that may prove useful for building more complex leisure maps that are also closer to reality. They point out that, while they adopt a general and geo-referenced view of the distribution of public green spaces in the city, there is insufficient qualitative knowledge that allows identifying the organized harmful leisure options existing in the city, that is, the areas of substance abuse, compulsive gaming or irrational consumption, among others. Likewise, they encourage debate on the places where culture takes place and is promulgated. In this regard, the projection of a cartography of leisure appears not only as an attractive but also as a stimulating epistemological proposal.

Figueroa extends the reflection to key historical sources, tracing the development of the ideas

of happiness, well-being, etc. in non-Western cultures, exploring the specific case of the ancient Indian culture and a number of ideas on what a good life should be like and be composed of. To do that, he focuses on Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, one of the two great epic poems written in the Sanskrit language, and one of the most influential texts in the construction of the Indian identity. Through his work, he shows how illuminating can be the study of original texts from ancient non-Western cultures, in that they may give access to ideals and views about good life that may deepen our understanding of quality of life beyond the view of contemporary Western societies, and measurable criteria. Besides that, as he points out, retrieving the multi-layered visions of the good life in ancient India, even if these occur as literary testimonies, help to articulate a more balanced view of that which this culture regarded as a good life. The vision he works on in the text "can also be relevant to contemporary debates on the possibility of articulating, also in India, models of life designed not to constrain or exclude but to conciliate and include". His proposal articulates new possibilities of consideration of time and space in relation to the notion of a good life, leaving open a very interesting direction to explore, associated to History and Language, in the approach of quality of life, well-being, etc.

## 25.2 Part II. Physical Activity and Sports

The second part of the book introduces us into the notion of the body as a semantic vector through which the evidence of the social actors' relationship with the world is constructed. Different significations stem and propagate from the body that form the basis of existence, both at an individual and a collective level, and the body thus becomes the axis of the relationship with the world, time and place, which in turn shapes the social actors' outlook. It is through their corporeal condition that subjects transform the world into a familiar and coherent fabric, which is available to them both in terms of action and comprehension, and which creates sense in a continuous

manner. Thus, the human being is actively immersed into a given social and cultural space, while at the same time social order is filtered through the body. In addition, given that the body is the supreme point of imputation in the symbolic field, the notion that the body is inscribed in a complex network of correspondences—between body and cosmos or in the form of separation between body and cosmos (Le Breton 2002)—offers challenging lines of enquiry as to the different cultures of well-being across the world.

Cummins argues that the idea that "exercise is good for you" is so deeply rooted in Western thought that it has the status of a tradition. His review of the literature shows a continued lack of reliable evidence showing a direct link between physical activity and subjective well-being (SWB). However, at the same time, the author argues that there is abundant evidence of indirect links through which, for example, physical activity promotes social contact and the subjective experience of feeling connected, and further fosters SWB management, among others. The author concludes that the positive relationship between physical activity and SWB is primarily based on facilitated social relationships. This conclusion suggests multiple directions for further study.

Toscano states that the place assigned to physical activity by the Hippocratic concept of *díaita* (diet) reflects the importance of subjects' behavior over time and that their conduct has always been based on the practice of games and sports, which are indicators of the lifestyles of the different ancient cultures. This study contributes a perspective that integrates History and Physical Education and supports our proposal to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, which thus provides a richer framework of reflection on the subjects under study, as we have said before.

Turning once again to the research-public management dynamics, Marujo, Gonçalves, Neto, Palma and Pereira Lopes signal that over the last few years, the general public, as well as institutional and national policymakers, have shown a growing interest in the outcomes of the happiness and well-being scientific agenda and

that this implies a growing responsibility for scholars to develop measurement tools and promotional programs that are socially relevant. In line with these considerations, Singh provides a reflexive and researched account of a living experience that focuses upon juxtaposing conditions in a society still divided by race and class: South Africa. The author states that in quality of life studies that have to do with material conditions amongst the working, middle and upper classes in heterogeneous societies, it is more than educational levels and incomes that have to be brought into focus. He points out crucial issues that should be included, such as race, ethnicity, religion, caste and spoken languages, considering the different stratification societies can have (Rothschild 1981). The author also mentions that political decision making is theoretically about deployment of resources for the upliftment of social groups, but it can be done with (subtle) biases towards specific groups.

Pagan points to the lack of studies analyzing the impact of participation in sports on life satisfaction of people without disabilities in general, and of people with disabilities in particular. The author agrees with our findings that people with disabilities face greater difficulties and constraints when they demand sport activities. This brings about the need to conduct studies into the subject which take into account the different types of disabilities and articulate their findings with public management, thus favoring the implementation of proper policies and integration. Mack, Wilson and Gunnell conducted similar research into physical activity practiced by individuals with osteoporosis. The authors make recommendations for health researchers which address the specific limitations and gaps currently noted in the literature expressly designed to examine the relationship between physical activity and well-being. The study also examines issues spanning conceptual problems, measurement issues and insight into mechanisms theorized to promote well-being.

Riso and Jürimäe review the physical activity habits of Estonian children and point out that while knowledge of the importance of physical activity (PA) during childhood and adolescence has increased internationally, the physical inactivity of children and young people is still a growing problem all over the world. The authors add that the health behavior habits achieved in later childhood often track into adulthood and thus it is important to introduce a healthy lifestyle and physical activity in school years, and further point to the possibility/need to promote a specific culture on this subject. Câmara, Guimarães Alves and Anziliero Aross report similar findings for adolescents in Brazil in a study on predictors of physical activity and sports and their influence on the well-being of this group. The authors point to the effective practice of physical activity/sports in a variety of possible contexts in the life of adolescents as a strategy towards the promotion of this population's quality of life. They thus identify a critical factor that merits further exploration from a qualitative perspective—but which can also yield subsequent quantitative measurements—relating to the contextual influences in the practice of physical activity and sports among adolescents. Such key factor includes the practice of sports by individuals that are important in adolescents' lives, the encouragement to practice sports by individuals they consider important in their lives, the significance of having reasons for practicing sports and adolescents' intention to practice sports in the future. Similarly, Villarreal Sosa conducts a study on Latin and African American Youth Participation in Sports and Leisure, its impact on social identity, educational outcomes, and quality of life. Of special interest is the underlying consideration of power (that can be understood as an "ability to exert influence") and the perspectives suggested by the author to address future research (well-being networks?, ways of co-production of well-being?, etc.).

We finally wish to express once again our gratitude to those who made this publication possible through their contributions. We hope this book fosters reflection on the issues addressed, invites new lines of research and helps to strengthen the synergy between academia and public management.

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