Time and Transitions: Influences on the Leisure Time Physical Activity of Young Adults in Rural and Urban Australia

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University
Certificate of Authorship of Thesis

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, and no material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the text.

Kathleen Anne Mann

May, 2016
The irony of doing a PhD on leisure time physical activity is not lost on me. I spent more time than I would prefer sitting at a computer on precious weekends and evenings, and towards the end selfishly ignoring family, friends and my local community. On the days when the sun would stream in through my office window and I would hear others outside playing on the oval, riding bikes, or friends would be off camping, I would long to be outside playing with them. Inevitably, this would crystallise my thinking on what leisure actually means, what that time means, the activities, the places and the people. On these days, feeling deprived of it all, I would feel my focus sharpen, and my resolve to see the issue surrounding physical activity clearer deepen.

The by-product of this would not have been possible without the unswerving love and support of my husband Nick, and children Tara and Jeremy. Not only was Nick’s assistance with the statistical data most welcome, but his ability to see the bigger picture of life has kept me going throughout the journey.

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Abstract

The rising physical inactivity rates of all adult age subgroups in Australia are a growing concern within public health. This original research explores a range of elements that influence the leisure time physical activity (LTPA) of young adults in South East Queensland, Australia.

Using a socio-ecological framework and a grounded theory approach, this study combines data from 61 participant interviews, five key actor interviews, focus groups and environmental surveys across rural, outer-metropolitan and inner-metropolitan study sites. Recruitment targeted young adults aged 18-30 years, in sedentary occupations or study and without dependent children; and key actors including the representative for each local council. Analyses of these data link understandings of leisure and leisure time, physical activity and the nature of consumption of and for leisure that influence levels and types of engagement in physical activity. Semi-structured interviews explore aspects of the participants’ upbringing, details of their past and present leisure, transport practices, the effects of their environment and the effects of their socio-demographic position. Interviews with key actors highlighted local government policy environment influencing facilities, services and access particular to each area. An environmental audit of each site and a set of closed questions for participants assisted in this process. Together, data collection sought to reveal the enablers and inhibitors of physical activity for young adults living in each area. They show an important differentiation in the understanding of leisure and affective responses to leisure and physical activity that relate directly to levels of physical activity in their spare time, when leisure is more about relaxation and socialising than pursuits that involve physical activity. Perceptions of leisure, leisure time and physical activity
change during young adulthood to begin to acknowledge the value of health maintenance as an appropriate reason to be physically active.

The research findings provide insight into the enablers and inhibitors for young adults being physically active as well as directions for strategic interventions relating to young adults in the areas of health promotion, community recreation and local government planning. The transitions leading up to and including young adulthood are important influences in the attitude towards physical activity. Three elements are core enablers to LTPA: 1) deep familiarity and enjoyment of LTPA from youth; 2) access to affordable quality goods and services; and 3) access to age-appropriate local opportunities. During young adulthood, people’s affective responses play an important role in whether a young adult is physically active or not. As they adjust to the new demands of adulthood, they prefer for leisure experiences that provide opportunities to relax, reboot, rejuvenate, regenerate, renew, re-centre, re-energise, release and find relief. These highlight common sensations sought during leisure to form what I call the Nine R’s of Leisure. The findings present particular challenges for planners and promoters of LTPA and my recommendations target the development of physical literacy involving families and the whole school. In doing so, this research reframes the construction of opportunities for physical activity that will influence ways of understanding and prioritising physical activity in young adulthood.
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List of Abbreviations

ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW  Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANGEO  Analysis grid for environments linked to obesity
ANU  Australian National University
CBD  Central business district
HEPA  Health-enhancing physical activity
HPE  Health and physical education
HPS  Health Promoting Schools
LTPA  Leisure time physical activity
PE  Physical education
POST  Public Open Space Tool
SCT  Social cognitive theory
SDT  Self-determination theory
SEP  Socio-economic positioning
SES  Socio-economic status
SLA  Statistical local area
TAFE  Technical and further education
TPB  Theory of planned behaviour
WHO  World Health Organization
Chapter 1: Framing the Problem of Physical Activity

What is it that prevents many adult Australians from achieving the recommended physical activity guidelines? One of the most complex questions to answer in public health in Australia is why people continue with behaviours or practices that are at best unhelpful to their own health and at worst actually harmful. Mirroring the question asked by the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA), I ask why, after decades of health promotion campaigns, improved infrastructure for public and active transport, and improved access to public recreation spaces (Australian National Preventive Health Agency, 2013), do the rates of physical inactivity continue to climb?

Physical inactivity has become a major health issue in the 21st century (Giles-Corti, 2006): approximately 56% of adult Australians are insufficiently active (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014). The increasing strength and sophistication of scientific evidence supporting types and amounts of physical activity for various age groups has influenced the evolution of physical activity guidelines in Australia and provided clearer guidance for what people should be aiming for in order to achieve them, as it has internationally (Brown, Bauman, Bull and Burton, 2012). Given the nature of modern lifestyles, the shift towards cumulative bouts of different types of physical activity as a way to prevent the health consequences/implications of sedentary behaviour is a realistic and meritorious approach.

With the focus age group of my research being young adults, and the relevance of looking at the preceding years of adolescence, a summary of the current recommendations for the physical activity of youth and adults are as follows:

**Youth aged 13-17 years:** accumulate 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day; including
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- a variety of aerobic activities and some vigorous intensity activity;
- muscle and bone strengthening activities on at least three days per week;
- participate in up to several hours per day of other activity for extra health benefits; and
- minimise the time spent each day being sedentary.

**Adults aged 18-64 years:** accumulate 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity (or equivalent combination) each week; including

- muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week; and
- minimise time spent in prolonged sitting and break up periods of time sitting as much as possible.

(Department of Health, 2014b, 2014c).

Realising the idea of people embracing physical activity and a healthy lifestyle would serve the dual purpose of achieving individual health outcomes and addressing broader public health agendas. For individuals, physical activity is essential for optimal health and a known protective factor for cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers and depression (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). With respect to public health, physical inactivity contributed 6.6% to the total burden of disease and injury in Australia in 2003, and the extent of burden increases with age (Begg et al., 2007, p. 81).

These patterns exemplify the economic and social divides within Australian society by perpetuating the disadvantages already experienced by these subpopulations. Socio-economic disadvantage influences rates of physical activity: people living in areas with low household incomes, low-level qualifications and low job skills are twice as inactive as those living in areas with high household incomes, high qualifications and high job skills (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013c).
Particularly high prevalence rates of physical inactivity occur for women, older adults, those with limited education, unemployed persons, those who are obese and those located in rural areas (Giles-Corti, 2006, p. 359). As modern occupations, transport and recreational pursuits become more sedentary, there is a greater need to focus on the maintenance of an all-round healthy lifestyle. In particular, one that involves recommended levels of physical activity on a regular basis, a nutritionally sound diet, and engaging social interactions. These components are most effective when in a daily routine and continued throughout life.

Data from the 1999 National Physical Activity Survey (Armstrong, Bauman & Davies, 2000), and the 2004–05 National Health Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b) show increasing levels of physical inactivity across most stages of the life cycle. In Australia, physical inactivity rates have been rising in all age groups but are highest among adults in their middle to later years of life. More recently, however, there is evidence of a rising trend in inactivity in the young adult age group: 57% of young men and 71% of young women aged between 18 and 24 years were insufficiently active (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b, 2013b).

While much of the physical activity scholarship to date has focused on the phases of the life course such as childhood, middle age and the elderly, my project takes a different approach and examines the young adult group to uncover why their rates of physical inactivity are also on the rise. Many of the main drivers cited for inactivity are increasingly sedentary work and study (Plotnikoff, Healy, Morgan, Gilson & Kennedy, 2014), carer duties and car reliance and are noted as being beyond the easy control of the individual to change (Hinde & Dixon 2005; Banwell, Broom, Davies & Dixon et al., 2012). There is, therefore value in paying closer attention to aspects with which
individuals would have greater flexibility—their leisure time—and examine what shapes their choices for leisure and physical activity.

In this thesis, I will argue that for individuals, the influence of the affective domain is as much a contributor to their participation in physical activity as any other factor in their day-to-day life, and that the main focus of leisure for young adults actually fosters sedentarism rather than physical activity. In short, being physically active enough for optimal health requires conscious thought and action, is influenced by commodities, and is assisted greatly by living in the right circumstances. Beginning adulthood with these habits may well have consequences for the ways individuals engage in opportunities for physical activity available to them later in their life course, especially during parenting when resource constraints and time pressure may increase.

1.1 Changing Physical Activity in Australia

Health promotion messages about being more physically active in daily life have been a common mantra in Australia for some decades. In the 1970s, the Life. Be in it™ (Life. Be in it, 2011) campaign sent waves of messages into Australian homes via print media, radio commercials and the relatively new medium of the colour television.

Images of Norm rising from the couch, leaving behind the beer and heading off with his wife Norma, their two children and pet dog for a walk outside was meant to encourage Australians to change their leisure practices. It was a stark suggestion that some aspects of the ‘typical Australian lifestyle’ were detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

Notably, the Life. Be in it™ campaign was pitched at white middle-class urban Australians.

Over the previous decades, the health status of Australians had come under scrutiny and become the subject of numerous health promotion campaigns calling for reform to lifestyles that favoured sedentary habits and unhealthy food. In Australia,
rapid advances in technologies forged changing social expectations and lifestyles in the post-World War II era. During this time, employment became increasingly mechanised and sedentary, and motorised transport became more accessible and began to signify success. Tensions emerged within the broader health sector as the growing array of entertainment options that required little or no physical movement clashed with the promotion of physical activity as a way to remain morally as well as physically strong (Banwell et al., 2012; Dixon & Broom, 2007). The addition of increased availability of convenience foods and the moral dimensions of fitness became part of the discourse and exacerbated the problems for health, including the maintenance of healthy weight (Davies, 2011).

Although endorsement of the global strategy for diet and physical activity occurred over a decade ago (World Health Organization, 2004), the main issues remain unresolved: changing societal attitudes and values towards healthy eating and activities. Of course, this can be difficult in settings where young people spend a great deal of time, such as schools, to fully implement policies to help meet the physical activity guidelines for young people. This not only worries child and adolescent health experts (Dugan, 2008; Flynn et al., 2006), but also makes for sensationalised media headlines and prompts research focused on the lifestyle factors of Australian children (Telford et al., 2009).

1.1.1 Participation of young people in physical activities. Recent evidence from the 2014 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Young people in Australia highlights the very low physical activity levels of young people (Active Healthy Kids Australia, 2014; Schranz et al., 2014). Although the participation of Australians in community-based sports has risen overall (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007b, 2013b), it tapers during mid-adolescence (Salmon et al., 2014; Vella,
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Cliff & Okely, 2014). During this phase of life, young people are starting to spread their
time and energies across increased study loads, part-time work and personal
relationships, and dealing with changing physiology and increasingly independent
mobility. The peers and partners of young people are more influential during this phase
than their parents. Moreover, although many Australian schools do what they can to
improve the amount of physical activity of students, schools compete with many other
social priorities relegated to the school system and the school curriculum (Leger &
Nutbeam, 2000). Many schools aspire to be a setting for health promotion. They adopt
the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework as a way to engage with the imperative
of the World Health Organization (WHO). In an effort to promote healthy lifestyles,
especially in nutrition and physical activity, schools adapt their canteen policies, plant
kitchen gardens, strengthen the delivery of their health and physical education (HPE)
curriculum and generally aim for a whole-of-school approach to promote health and
wellbeing in their school community—but to what effect?

Systematic reviews of intervention strategies to change people’s physical
activity behaviours note particular qualities that mark an effective approach. Notably,
efficacious intervention strategies provide information and easy access to opportunities,
and provide support to people in school, workplace and community settings. They
include informational interventions, behavioural and social interventions with
individuals and in schools and community settings, and environmental and policy
interventions (Kahn et al., 2002). Additionally, social support, counselling, health
education and a sound theoretical foundation are noted as common features of effective
interventions, group-based interventions being the most successful (Cleland, Tully, Kee
& Cupples, 2012). Although these features are quite general (and really common sense
approaches), strong leadership that actively supports change and a focus on the health
and wellbeing of community members is at the heart of each strategy. Reinforcing this approach are the recommendations made by leading health researchers and advocates to increase the levels of physical activity for all Australians (Plotnikoff, Healy, Morgan, Gilson, & Kennedy, 2014; Salmon, Foreman, Eime, Brown, Hodge & Milton, 2014; Salmon et al., 2014; Stanley & McCue, 2014). Even when schools adopt the HPS framework and all of its guidance and structures to galvanise the school community to improve their health and wellbeing, the leadership of the principal is the lynchpin to making it fully effective.

1.1.2 A local community quandary. Community-based groups provide a wide range of options for young people to develop physical activity habits for life, including dancing, callisthenics, athletics, tennis, four main codes of football, cricket, netball, baseball, softball, hockey, volleyball, swimming, triathlon, cycling (mountain biking and road cycling), circus skills, adventure activities (e.g., bushwalking, rock climbing), gymnastics and martial arts. Limited funding for community-based sport and arts development, however, has created a perplexing environment for families, where clubs need to raise funds to subsidise the escalating costs of insurance, equipment, officials and venue hire. Canteens at sporting clubs offer soft drinks, caffeinated drinks, hot dogs, chips, chocolate and lollies to help offset operational costs, as well as sell chocolates as annual fundraising events.

In addition to on-site canteen sales, community sports clubs involve merchandising and reward systems for young players. Local activity clubs and organisations often sell self-branded merchandise (separate from team uniforms) as a way of identifying their participants at events as well as publicising the group. The wholesale cost of such merchandise is usually subsidised by sponsorships by local businesses and especially fast-food chains, which the clubs and organisations are
obliged to promote. In many cases, these fast-food chains also provide free reward certificates to junior sporting teams each week. Without revenue from fundraising and sales, participant fees charged by clubs and organisations would be higher and unaffordable for many families in the community. This is a common trade-off by the clubs for the financial support of large corporations.

The quandary for advocates of health promotion then lies in the contradictory health messages that these features send to young people and their families (Denniss, 2007). On the one hand, young people have more opportunities to be physically active in a wide variety of spheres. These are however, embedded with consumer messages about lifestyle choices that generally have both financial and potentially health costs for the individuals involved (Banwell, Broom, Davies & Dixon, 2012).

Paradoxically, many of the very places where social physical activity occurs, such as sporting venues and arenas, fitness centres and swimming pools, include vending machines and cafés selling energy-dense, nutrient-deficient foods and drinks. Similar is the ever-present placement of confectionery fundraising stations in the reception area of many organisations—symbols of convenience in the foyers of some commercial buildings, government offices, higher education institutions and shopping centres—and schools and sporting clubs fundraising with chocolate bars. Another example is the influence of vending machines. The choice to purchase a chocolate bar or packet of chips after a swimming session involves more than the mere availability of the actual machine and its enticing array of goodies or treats. For those with children, the additional ‘pester power’ children can have with their parents (Banwell, Shipley & Strazdins, 2007), or the reassurance of the chocolate company advertisement that ‘after all, you’ve earned it’ or ‘you deserve a treat every now and then’ overrides other messages in the heat of the moment. It is important to recognise the conscious and
consistent personal effort required to override the unhealthy options when they are a constant presence in modern life.

The retail practice of ‘nudging’ aims to influence the customer at the point of sale with items placed near the cash register and in the line-up to the register. Even the ‘confectionery free’ checkout register in a grocery store usually contains chilled soft drinks whose companies make additional payments to place their product in this prime location. Unfortunately, attempts at nudging dietary practices at points of sale by some recreational sports settings have found it to be less effective in changing behaviour than hoped (Olstad et al., 2014). Their attempts to use the same product placement strategies as the confectionery suppliers do not have the same effect. Although they do not offer specifics, the authors suggest that there are other, more complex influences in recreational settings affecting dietary practices.

The juxtaposition of sites of physical activity and unhealthy food options reinforces the very patterns implicated in rising rates of overweight and obesity: a culture of convenience, energy-dense and nutrient-deficient food and drink. When such points of sale exist within sites of physical activity (such as a swimming pool or fitness centre), they present a contradiction that muddies the message to eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly for optimal health (Dugdale & Dixon, 2007). This represents an unholy alliance between a known contributor to obesity and a known contributor to healthy weight. At this point, the role of agency and values in health behaviour comes into sharper focus. People need to be proactive for their health and consciously making decisions about their health, even in a setting where physical activity is the main purpose. People are required to be constantly mindful of whether or not they are making a healthful decision.
1.2 Contributors to Physical Activity in Modern Society: Circumstance and Choice

When it comes to using discretionary time, it is natural that people will select options that reflect not just their immediate wants and needs, but also their immediate surroundings, past experiences and aspirations for their future. It is known that a number of features of modern urban development promote physical activity: infrastructure such as pedestrian and cycle paths (shared paths) and bridges; community-supported ‘come and try’ opportunities; and non-competitive events such as fun runs, walking and cycling events. However, the inclusion of these features and opportunities alone does not equate to an overall increase in rates of physical activity.

The choices of what people do in their spare time depend on many aspects: their other commitments to duties in the home or community, their caring responsibilities, their perceptions of safety and competence, their own health and energy levels, their personal resources (knowledge, finances, time and equipment) and their motivations and corresponding personal preferences. The values and expectations gained through social experiences, the actions of significant others; upbringing and access to different options embedded within places of work, home and recreation all contribute to the decisions made by individuals.

The circumstances in which people live also contribute greatly to what they are able to do for physical activity. Where people live geographically influences the types and quality of opportunities for physical activity, their household composition influences their exposure to lifestyle behaviours, and their level of education and type of employment at the different stages of their lives affects the opportunities that they can afford to take up.
1.3 Time to Be Active

Health promotion campaigns over the past few decades have made deliberate efforts to change social perceptions of leisure time physical activity (LTPA) in Australia. In targeting the combined influences of time pressure and unhealthy lifestyle options, different generations of campaigns have aimed to raise the public’s awareness of the positive effect of proactive decision-making in changing key health behaviours, such as serving sizes (Swap It, Don’t Stop It), physical activity habits Find Thirty™ and Life. Be In It.™ and healthy lifestyle choices (Shape Up Australia) and awareness of health risks due to being overweight (Measure Up; Swap It, 2013).

Strazdins’ (2008) analysis of the Find Thirty™ campaign (Department of Health, 2008) highlights time scarcity issues having a negative effect on people’s health. The slogan implies that people no longer routinely spend time in physical activity in daily routines, and now need to ‘find’ or reclaim the time. However, as Australians remain insufficiently active, the impact of such campaigns is inconclusive and this prompts a closer investigation of the features of modern life that more specifically serve to foster or hinder physical activity. In particular, what shapes the physical activity behaviours of young adults living in Australia? What aspects of life actually help or hinder their participation in physical activity?

If the circumstances of the majority of Australians are not conducive to easy and affordable everyday physical activity, then health promotion campaigns will only ever have a minimal effect, a consideration mirrored by recent intergenerational research highlighting links between social change and leisure practices (Banwell et al., 2012). If ‘finding’ the recommended type and amount of time to be physically active is difficult or uncomfortable for the average Australian, then the desired health outcome will not be achieved. The simplicity of the message to rise from the couch, go outside and be more
physically active apparently ignores the complexities facing the citizen in modern society. This message, and others like it, will not resonate with those who either do not enjoy or are not comfortable being active, or do not know how.

Many of the quantifiable items that might indicate physical activity suggest that purchases in these areas have grown since the 1980s. The figures for retail sales of bicycles, gym memberships, recreational exercise equipment, sporting gear and sporting club membership in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b; Hajkowicz, Cook, Wilhelmseder & Boughen, 2013) rise incrementally each year. This evidence of consumption practices related to exercise suggests that at least some of the population have intentions to be physically active. However, increased sales in these areas are inconsistent with the trend of the past 20 years towards declining levels of physical activity in (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a).

One question to ask is: who is actually using these products and services and how much, and to what extent are they used as a part of a long-term commitment to being active? Perhaps those who are already fit are getting fitter or are at least purchasing commodities to maintain their fitness. Alternatively, are the sales figures reflecting a wider intention to be active, while the statistics for inactivity are reflecting a failure to achieve the outcome? Broadly speaking, the sales of items related to physical activity need not correlate with actual usage.

The task of understanding aspects and interactions that influence health behaviour in this context therefore requires particular conceptual frameworks developed to comprehend complex naturally occurring systems.
1.4 Conceptualising Health Problems: Ecological and Biocultural Perspectives

The need to improve understandings of the complex factors and mechanisms that encourage health-promoting levels of physical activity is widely acknowledged (Ball, 2006; Berentzen & Sørensen, 2007; Brown, 2006; Brown, Salmon & Burton, 2006; Samuelson, 2005; World Health Organization, 2006a). In addition, the nexus between environmental and sociocultural is known to be important (Sallis, Kraft & Linton, 2002), and researchers are yet to fully understand the nature of the interactions between them and what effects these interactions have on the physical activity behaviours of individuals (Ball, 2006). Ecological and biocultural frameworks are particularly useful to help tease out the many variables, examine the interactions between them and implicate a range of contributing factors to the particular health problem. Being able to think about the problem in such ways is helpful when exploring a broad range of influences on people’s physical activity in their daily contexts.

As an overarching approach, ecological thinking is used to understand influences within a context that the public health and health promotion literature suggests as a useful approach for conceptualising health problems (McLaren & Hawe, 2005; Petticrew, 2007). In a similar way to systems thinking, it considers the wider interrelationships or systems in which a problem occurs. Ecological thinking takes into account the individual and environmental determinants of health and other behaviours and creates a structure in which to analyse the relationships between different aspects of the context in which particular health issues exist.

Individual factors include the personal history and circumstances such as income, education and living arrangements, and psychosocial aspects such as attitudes, beliefs, values, self-confidence and competence. Environmental determinants include
the policy and social environment as well as the built and natural environments that make up the physical landscape. An ecological approach to understanding key aspects of LTPA also draws on a social determinants approach to health behaviour. By including social, political, demographic and economic elements, this way of constructing an inquiry enhances our ability to understand interactions from a novel perspective.

The biocultural model used by Ulijaszek (2007) to examine the interplay of multiple contributors to a health issue is an example of a framework that acknowledges the interconnectedness of a range of elements when attempting to understand global health issues. The strength of this model is its focus on understanding the interactions of contributing factors in context: for the obesity complex, this is about the interactions between energy intake and levels of physical activity combined with environmental, genetic and cultural factors. For a study into physical (in)activity, the inclusion of such elements within the research design should provide the scope to identify and analyse a range of interconnections, especially between personal attitudes and experiences, environmental and social factors.

Swinburn, Egger and Raza (1999) emphasise the role of the policy environment when investigating settings that promote healthful practices in relation to obesogenic environments. They argue that the political domain that influences the norms within a social structure largely determines the level and type of interaction that individuals and groups have in their local area. Systematic reviews of studies using ecological frameworks examine policy correlates for physical activity (McCormack & Shiell, 2011) and include policies that affect places of work, education and recreation, and where organisations, such as government agencies, have a role to provide services or facilities. In addition, common practices within the family, social circles and local
community, and policies and practices in schools as an example, influence the types, timings and amounts of physical activity in which individuals generally engage. Such dimensions of health practices are often overlooked (van der Horst et al., 2007).

Therefore, although there is direction from leading health authorities regarding recommended amounts of physical activity across the life course (World Health Organization, 2006b) and suggestions on how to achieve these recommendations (Australia, 2014; Department of Health, 2008; Life. Be in it, 2011; World Health Organization, 2004, 2006b), the challenge remains to reverse the trend of physical inactivity (Bauman, Finegood & Matsudo, 2009). What is needed is a different kind of exploration of the issues surrounding physical activity. Given the effects of physical inactivity on the burden of disease of Australians (Begg et al., 2007) and the growing proportion of younger adults who are insufficiently active, it is timely to be investigating this age group.

Of course, central to any investigation into this modern health problem is clarifying how the notion of time to be active is understood and considered by young adults (and what influences this consideration)—and then how that time is used and to what effect. It is expected that including young adults’ perceptions of time, leisure and physical activity within an ecological framework to study factors influencing their physical (in)activity (Bauman et al., 2012) will enhance our understanding of the correlates of physical activity and physical activity behaviour.

1.4.1 Prime time is leisure time. Systematic reviews of longitudinal studies in physical activity highlight increasing levels of LTPA among adults and support the case for exploring understandings and experiences of leisure time physical activity (Allman-Farinelli, Chey, Merom, Bowles & Bauman, 2009; Borodulin et al., 2015; Juneau & Potvin, 2010; Petersen, Thygesen, Helge, Grønbæk & Tolstrup, 2010; Román-Viñas et
In concert with decreasing levels of the two other widely used categories of physical activity: commuting physical activity (or active transport) and occupational physical activity (Borodulin et al., 2015; Juneau & Potvin, 2010; Ng & Popkin, 2012; Román-Viñas et al., 2007; Stamatakis et al., 2007), these studies note the importance of two specific correlations. There is a greater sense of autonomy experienced in leisure time (and less control and more stress during work time) and there is a greater sense of self-efficacy for leisure activities with LTPA (Bauman et al., 2012).

The rationale is that leisure time permits more opportunities for choice. In their analysis of data from the National FINRISK longitudinal study, Borodulin and colleagues (2015) note that although levels of LTPA increased in Finland for the 30 years of 1982–2012, this did not compensate for the drop in levels of occupational physical activity and commuting physical activity in the same period. They hypothesise that the increase in LTPA is largely due to the ‘systematic promotion of physical activity’ (p. 5) of this approach in Finland, and they note similar trends for LTPA in cohort studies from other countries, suggesting that it is becoming an increasingly important time trend to monitor.

Therefore, notwithstanding the work done to support active transport and physical activity in the workplace, the current notion that leisure time is a prime time for adults to be physically active underpins many of the efforts by health promotion agencies and government to have adults make the most of opportunities during their spare time and get themselves moving. The assumption that people are willing and able to be physically active in their leisure time seems to be central. The straightforward assumption that people will be able to dedicate a portion of their spare time each day to achieving the recommended amount of physical activity belies the complexity of the
whole issue around why people need that time. With the attention firmly on LTPA, it is timely to ask the questions, What is leisure? and What does physical activity mean to young adults?

The term leisure time physical activity pinpoints two central aspects—leisure and time—but studies rarely seem to reflect how these might be interpreted, or understood by respondents. Described also as discretionary time, available time or spare time, leisure time is time in which people have the freedom to do what they prefer. The temporal notion of spare time as needing to accommodate all the lifestyle components that are unachievable in the core times to sleep, work or eat appears as both the problem and the solution. However, a key issue in being regularly physically active still revolves around what people should prefer to do (i.e., knowing what it is that they should do) and what they would rather do and why. When it comes to developing and sustaining healthful practices or habits, this could well be a game changer for intervention and promotion strategies. What features of society or the environment influence leisure preferences; and is leisure time the type of time that young adults will really use to be physically active?

1.4.2 Leisure and consumerism. As a multi-dimensional social construct of the post-industrial era, leisure is an accepted, and indeed expected, part of modern life (Page & Connell, 2010). Moreover, although definitions vary, the application of leisure as a concept occurs in terms of what it is not: it is not work nor is it other duty-bound activities or time. Likewise, people expect their leisure to be enjoyable and to meet needs not otherwise met by the functional parts of their lives (sleeping, eating or duties such as work or study). Descriptions of the common elements of leisure vary, but they generally encompass categories similar to those proposed by Lynch and Veal (2006): doing nothing, games, sport, the arts and entertainment, tourism, hobbies or interests,
socialising, recreation and play (pp. 21–22). However as Kaplan (1991) notes, leisure is a highly individualistic concept, and therefore, individual perceptions of what constitutes leisure should be sought.

Despite common elements, attitudes to and expectations for leisure continue to change. Quite naturally, this also drives changes in the spending patterns of consumers. Rapid advancements in innovation, growth in service industries, and establishment of standardised regulated work hours have freed time and money for the pursuit of leisure (Haworth & Veal, 2005). However, it could be said that standardised work hours and conditions in Australia are being eroded with more casualised and ‘flexible’ work models and deregulated industrial regulation processes. Technological innovation and changes in the economy, coupled with social expectations about standards of living, increase opportunities and expectations for consumption, including consumption of items related to transport, entertainment and recreation.

In this regard, snapshots of household expenditure over the past decade show how Australians have been spending their weekly income. Of note is the percentage of income people commit to areas of their lives where there is some discretion. Regarding transport and recreation in particular, the 2003–04 Household Expenditure Survey showed that Australian adults spent nearly 16% of their weekly income on transport and 13% on recreation. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) notes that the spending per person on transport and recreation of young-couple-only households is ‘relatively high’ compared with other life cycle stages (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006a). Considering the spending habits of young adults, the main difference between 2003–04 and 2009–10 in spending was a slight increase (1.5%) among singles on their transport (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). Spending on recreation and transport forms a
reasonable proportion of a young adult’s earnings and is therefore an area to consider when exploring financial influences on LTPA.

1.5 Young Adults and Physical Activity

The physical activity practices of young adults remain an understudied area, despite the ongoing decline in their rates of physical activity (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b, 2011b; Bauman, Bellew, Vita, Brown & Owen, 2002). Given that this age group is less likely to have the types of barriers to physical activity that are described by other adults (namely, time scarcity due to carer responsibilities or ill health), their opportunities to be active in their spare time should be greater.

Their particular stage in the life cycle makes young adults an interesting age group to study—not just because of their discretionary income, utilisation of technologies and their rising rates of physical inactivity, but because they take longer to reach the traditional markers of adulthood such as parenting, marriage and full-time employment than previous generations. This delay, according to other areas of health research, makes it particularly important to track their health and better understand and support their needs (Brown, 2008).

The 18–24-year-old age group today is at the upper end of generation Y. Noted for its members’ relatively high consumption of culture and recreation, Gen Y typically take up new lifestyle options and ideas readily, and have a commensurately high expenditure on recreation (McCrindle, 2003; Patterson, 2007). At the beginning of their careers, they earn relatively low incomes and are likely to be studying in tertiary education. Young adults without dependents also record higher levels of spending on recreation than similar age adults in households with children (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006a), which makes them a worthwhile group with whom to explore aspects of commodification and consumerism. These young people are also at an important
phase in their life course—the precursory phase to parenthood. As the parents of the next generation, the 18–30-year-old age group may well take their current health behaviours with them into parenthood.

My own professional contact with young adults studying to be teachers of HPE reinforces my interest in this age group. Through discussions about their own health practices and attitudes during tutorials, I noticed behaviours and underpinning value systems that challenged the stereotype of the HPE teacher (as a model of healthy, pro-social physical activity). These challenged perceptions and suggested something pivotal about their age group—that despite their career aspirations and education, even these young adults held values that influenced their individual health behaviour contrary to what they knew as ‘correct’ or appropriate health behaviours for teachers of HPE.

Their descriptions of their own behaviour regarding risk-taking, including drugs of all types, driving and sexual health practices, perhaps reflect more their biological and cognitive stage of development than the expectations of society with regard to their impending careers as teacher. I have expanded these personal observations, consulted literature on physical activity and leisure, and identified a need to explore the junctions between young adulthood, leisure and physical activity behaviour specifically, with the view to understanding what might improve the physical activity rates of 18–24-year-olds. Together, these form the cornerstones of my research project.

1.6 Focus of This Research Project

The aim of my study is to understand the values that affect the leisure practices and associated physical activity practices of individuals in their everyday lives and as they negotiate the early phase of adulthood. Specifically, it considers how combinations of personal circumstances (including aspects related to money and time, consumer practices, family upbringing and the impact of transitions in life) influence the choices
young adults make within the broader context of different cultural and physical environments.

In focusing on young adults and wanting to learn about the interactions between individuals and their physical, social and local environment, my study aims to:

1. better understand known drivers for health-enhancing LTPA, particularly demographics and neighbourhood characteristics;
2. describe lesser understood drivers for LTPA (such as area disadvantage, self-efficacy and local policy); and
3. uncover other drivers for LTPA that are not explored in the physical activity literature (such as the relevance of consumption practices to LTPA) for young adults.

Understanding these interactions has the potential to highlight aspects of the LTPA experience that could serve to inform more health-enhancing levels of LTPA for young adults, and maybe even support those of other population groups. Ultimately, this understanding should contribute to the development of more effective strategies to facilitate physical activity as a regular practice.

In order to do this, my research project required a multi-faceted design that has the capacity to show a wide range of factors such as social, personal history, economic, policy and the physical environment. By also including mechanisms for exploring and expressing the interactions between these factors, it offers a novel and insightful outlook on the problem of rising levels of physical inactivity for Australian young adults.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This review of scholarly literature focuses on the topics of leisure and physical activity and examines key works relating to influences on participation in LTPA. The material presented here informs my research project in different ways: in the conceptualisation, in the study design or in my interpretation of the findings. By beginning this chapter with the key concepts of leisure and leisure time, then turning to physical activity, and concluding with a discussion of the known contributors to inactivity, I draw attention to the centrality of psychosocial and environmental factors influencing participation.

2.2 Leisure and Leisure Time

As a feature of modern society, leisure sits alongside work as one of the two main considerations for individuals when they are making decisions about their personal resources in relation to time, money and effort (Laqueur, 1981; Lynch & Veal, 2006; Page & Connell, 2010). The multiple dimensions that differentiate it from the other major component of life in a modern society — work most commonly define it. This is not to imply that leisure and work are necessarily opposites, as ‘people have “grey areas” in their lives that are not wholly work or leisure but a mixture of both’ (Parker & Paddick, 1990, p. 2) such as those that are considered fun and not onerous or a burden to perform (e.g., babysitting or making toys for a charity).

One way to view how leisure is considered is by examining the way dimensions of time are distinguished for the purposes of statistical reporting. The ABS descriptions divide time usage into four main categories: necessary, contracted, committed and free time. Here, leisure pursuits are included in what is presented as something of a ‘leftover’ category within the dimension of free time:
Time and Transitions

*Necessary*—personal care activities: personal hygiene, sleeping and eating

*Contracted*—employment, education

*Committed*—child care, domestic activities, purchasing goods and services, voluntary work and care

*Free*—all other time, including social and community, interaction and recreation, and leisure activities. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998)

However, this manner of classification disguises the complexity of day-to-day living and the different ways people use their time and perform tasks that spread across more than one category, which effectively blurs the boundaries inherent in the groupings. Nonetheless, analysis from *How Australians Use Their Time, 2006* shows that Australians spent the bulk of their time in 2006 on necessary activities for personal care (an average of 46% of total time). Less than half of that amount of time was categorised as free time usage (an average of 22% of total time), 16% was for committed time activities and 15% was for contracted time activities; and in the 1997 iteration of the survey, the ABS noted little change from previous surveys at the broad level in time use patterns (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

While the percentage of time used for leisure may seem small, the types of pursuits in which people engage and why and how they benefit from them are more relevant. Some people enjoy ‘serious leisure’, in which their participation is voluntary and ongoing, and there is an obligation to hone skills or accept risks; examples include mountaineering, amateur car racing and fly fishing, in which their commitment is to the craft of the pursuit. To allow for the different ways individuals perceive and experience leisure, many studies tend to focus on the generic types of activities or pursuits undertaken in leisure or spare time. An example of the use of categories that encompass
a broad range of general undertakings such as these is that suggested by Lynch and Veal (2006): ‘doing nothing, games, sport, the arts and entertainment, tourism, hobbies/interests, socialising, recreation, play’ (pp. 21–22).

A key feature of the modern phenomenon of leisure is the understanding of what people are seeking to achieve within their free time, how they go about it, what meaning it has in their lives and whether the feel fulfilled in their aspirations. Given these features, the nature of leisure continues to evolve with social, cultural and economic change (Kaplan, 1991). Leisure can be a state of mind (Neulinger, as cited in Kaplan, 1991), provide creative opportunity, or contribute to an understanding of self and society. In order to be ‘leisure’, rather than duty or work, the content or activity that fills the unit of time must be enjoyable and provide a meaningful experience for someone. In this way, leisure as an experience will be different for each individual and the individual’s personal access to resources will necessarily affect the nature of the activity conducted during leisure. This will privilege those with greater mobility, money, social support, self-efficacy, level of education, prior experience and proximity to a wide range of opportunities. Additionally, differences in personality, affective response and motivational orientation play important roles in the choices individuals make regarding what they do for their own leisure (Barnett, 2006).

2.2.1 Experiencing leisure. One of the main critiques of leisure research is that less attention given to the meaning of the activity than to its type or form (Allison & Duncan, 1988). However, Mitchell (1988), specifically address the way that people experience leisure and make meaning from it in our modern industrialised lives. Mitchell sees the erosion of the quality of the experience of leisure by some of the structural features of modern life, such as the rules governing families, schools and community organisations, which take the spontaneity out of the way groups and
activities operate. The downside of the pervasiveness of such rules is the negative effects of an uninspiring system. Mitchell proposes that modernity has suppressed the important role of spontaneous expressivity in play, consequently stifling many opportunities for personal enjoyment and reward.

The nature and value of the leisure experience is the focus of works from the fields of psychology, anthropology and sociology. From psychology, we can apply Csikszentmihalyi’s (2008) theory of optimal experience and principles that underpin the corresponding concept of flow. Together, these help to explain many of the qualities that are central to how leisure is experienced. Flow is a term used to describe a state of being in which an individual is operating at a level of skill or competence and confidence that, at the time, matches or is equivalent to the level of challenge posed by an activity. The sense of flow is described as being ‘possible whenever commitment, energy, and will find meaningful and efficient application in the world of experience’, thus generating an optimal experience (Mitchell, 1988, p. 59). Given that this state is situational, the opportunities for flow are limited to circumstances in which environmental and psychological conditions are ‘right’ for the individual. If the balance is not present because a person lacks the necessary skill level or lacks confidence, then the type of task needed to provide a sense of flow is one that offers similarly low levels of complexity or skill. Mitchell links organisational structures in modern society with ways that ‘opportunities for expressive experience’ are stifled (Mitchell, 1988, p. 57) and highlights the interdependent nature of the relationship between stress, leisure and flow. In doing so, he implies that genuine leisure is not possible without the stimulation and meaning that stress brings to life. In short, we need an element of stress or challenge in our lives to need and appreciate leisure, but that leisure must involve an equal element of play or self-expression for the leisure to be truly beneficial. However,
commercialised leisure such as watching sport or shopping does not readily meet the required level of stimulation, personal action and challenge.

The role of stressors and heightened awareness for motivation in health behaviour is important, and is included in various theoretical models (discussed below), including that of psychic entropy (the state of consciousness that produces disorder by conflicting with individual goals) and psychic negentropy (the state of the mind when individual goals are met; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Altogether, the meaning made from the experience of leisure itself is pivotal to the options chosen by people and the benefits they derive from their engagement.

Anthropologist Roger Caillois (in Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), who is cited in many anthropology and psychology works describing leisure and the leisure experience, uses flow activities combined with classes of games to demonstrate the very broad range of activities in which ‘an ordered state of mind that is highly enjoyable’ (p. 72) and optimal experience are possible. The classes of games proposed by Caillois encapsulate four main domains of activities—creative, competitive, chance and consciousness-based activities—each with their own attributes that help players to achieve enjoyment and ultimately contribute to players achieving their potential. These domains and attributes also relate to the notion of motivators for participation in leisure activities, as Csikszentmihalyi (1988) alludes to when describing the role of personality in accounting for the differences in people’s enjoyment (or not) of different tasks. Here, Csikszentmihalyi notes that individual differences in responding to the same task, even if the individuals have a similar level of skill or competence and confidence with the task, will affect the level of their interest in performing that task. Although not necessarily experienced in relaxation, Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of optimal experience and flow requires an element of challenge that matches the capability of the performer.
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). However, an activity that requires the performer to be in a relaxed state could be effortless and enjoyable as well as one in which time passes quickly, such as watching a film or dining with friends.

2.2.2 Dimensions of leisure. Leisure has both individual-level and population-level (or ‘universal’) dimensions. Individual dimensions apply to the particular situation and needs of each person: the temporal (time not spent in work or duty), aesthetic (pleasurable) and purposeful (has meaning or purpose) nature of leisure. In the broader schema, universal-level dimensions apply to the social settings in which people live and how people perceive their place in that society generally: accessibility, creative opportunity, and an understanding of oneself in relation to society (Kaplan, 1991). From this position, Kaplan (1991) argues for transdisciplinary approaches to the study of leisure so that the dynamics of leisure relate to the whole of society.

Definitions of the term leisure to include ‘all non-work, non-consumer and non-transport activities whose primary goal is pleasure or improved health (e.g., watching television, and running for exercise)’ (Kypri, Donaldson & Johnstone, 2006, p. 99) are used when classifying physical activity interventions. In the definition provided by Kypri et al. (2006), consumer activities are those whose main purpose is to obtain goods and services, such as grocery shopping. However, the inclusion of exercise and other forms of physical activity for health maintenance raises the question of whether the experience of time used to manage or maintain one’s health is a leisure pursuit or a duty. The ABS categories of time use similarly do not include health maintenance activities specifically. Preliminary research in the area of LTPA of young adults presented by Jose and Hansen (2010) suggests that young adults do not always consider physical activity conducted in spare time if it they see it as a requirement to maintain their health.
2.2.3 Commodities and leisure. Influencing the conception and enactment of leisure is a combination of historical changes and technological developments. Shifts in attitudes to time, and having time to recreate, contribute to the evolution of leisure as an industry by way of consumer uptake of commodities linked to, or marketed for, leisure as an experience. Markers of this leisure industry include the provision of facilities, the manufacture of specialist equipment and clothing, and a wide range of services and knowledge providers to assist in the provision of activities and facilities (Lynch & Veal, 2006). Others note that leisure is experienced increasingly as the consumption of items designed to enhance what for many has become the leisure experience itself (Parker & Paddick, 1990; Stranger, 2011).

On average, Australians devoted 12.8% of their total weekly spending on goods and services related to recreation or leisure in 2003–2004. This represented the fourth largest category for spending on goods and services, exceeded only by food and non-alcoholic drinks, housing and transport (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006a). Television and listening to audio devices (such as radio and CDs) followed by phone, written and electronic mail rated as the most common forms of leisure pursuits in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998, 2008). The associated industries of sport, fitness, recreation, tourism, arts, entertainment and hospitality all trade on leisure pursuits and services as their commodity, and are dedicated to filling the leisure time of consumers (Page & Connell, 2010). As pointed out in literature from the leisure sector, members of the sport, fitness and recreation industry, in particular, market themselves as promoters of health and wellbeing. As a large employer across all aspects of the production and consumption of activities, services and facilities in Australia (Lynch & Veal, 2006), the leisure industry that supplies the activities and facilities to consumers
includes both profit-driven (the private sector) members and not-for-profit-driven (either the community sector or the public sector) members.

2.2.4 Choice and participation in leisure pursuits. Many features of daily life are noted as influencing what a person chooses to do (and have) in their free time. Aspects known to contribute to levels of participation in leisure and the types of pursuits chosen include time availability, financial capacity, social capacity, travel distances, cultural expectations, current trends, prior experiences, age, gender, social acceptability, physical and mental health, and physical capacity. Time constraints, particularly in relation to work hours and the travel to and from work, and the impact of the work environment on physical and mental health may greatly limit the choice of what to do in that time (Lynch & Veal, 2006; Strazdins, 2008). Differences in personality and intra- and interpersonal differences in particular, are known to influence individual choices in leisure participation (Kleiber & Dirkin, as cited in Parker & Paddick, 1990). Access to supportive social networks and an encouraging physical environment is as important for participation levels in leisure activities (Brown et al., 2006; Kerner, Kurrant & Kalinski, 2004; Sasidharan, Payne, Orsega-Smith & Godbey, 2006). Overall, elements such as these contribute to motivation as an overall social-psychological determinant of leisure (Page & Connell, 2010).

In addition to the elements of daily life influencing choice, psychosocial factors (such as self-concept, self-esteem and lifestyle) have direct effects on which types of pursuits attract an individual and which do not (Harvey, as cited in Parker & Paddick, 1990). A central reason for this is the concept of flow: the sensation people experience when they are engaged in a pursuit of their choosing that has personal meaning for them and is personally challenging and rewarding at the same time. The concept of flow originates from the field of psychology (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) and is examined
within the broad context of leisure studies and motivation (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989; Mitchell, 1988). In the field of leisure and sociology, researchers such as Mark Stranger (2011) see the experience of flow as central to the cult-like devotion to many leisure sports, such as surfing, and to the related elements of surfing apparel and surfing culture in Australia.

2.3 Physical Activity

Physical activity is a basic human need. The term physical activity is defined by WHO and others as ‘any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles resulting in energy expenditure above resting level’ (Caspersen et al., as cited in World Health Organization, 2006a, p. 2). Thus, by definition, the term accounts for a very broad range of activities, from fidgeting through to intense physical exertion. Because different people experience levels of intensity of physical activity differently, it is a difficult area for successful health policy and promotion.

Physical activity is also widely understood in terms of the underpinning dimensions of frequency (or number of each individual session), intensity (rate of energy expenditure), time (duration of each individual session) and type (of activity performed) (FITT). In relation to epidemiological studies of physical activity, a focus on the singular dimension of intensity has led to a lack of knowledge about the links between the other dimensions and chronic disease prevention (Barisic, Scott & Kreiger, 2011). Related to this is the relationship between these dimensions and health behaviour throughout different stages in life (Esliger & Tremblay, 2007).

The baseline level of fitness of individuals will influence their experience of any description of intensity; what is considered a ‘vigorous’ level of physical activity for someone with a high fitness at baseline will be different for someone with a comparatively low baseline level of fitness. Modern lifestyles have also affected the
nature and perceptions of physical activity in society. Health-promoting levels of physical activity are those that provide a health benefit and functional capacity, and are also known as health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA).

The health benefits of being physically active throughout life are well known; however less understood are the causal links between key elements. Being physically active in childhood and youth links to better health outcomes for children and adolescents, and increased overall health in adulthood (Boreham & Riddoch, 2001; Tammelin, Näyhä, Hills & Järvelin, 2003; Tammelin, Näyhä, Laitinen, Rintamäki & Järvelin, 2003), however it is noted that the lack of longitudinal surveillance of objectively measured physical activity shows gaps in our knowledge regarding causal relationships (Telford et al., 2013; Vella, Cliff, Magee & Okely, 2014). The flow on effect of this causal relationship is with the next age group, young adults, for whom the physical activity practices remain an understudied area, despite the precipitous increase in their rates of physical inactivity (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b, 2011b; Bauman, Bellew, Vita, Brown & Owen, 2002).

Of particular relevance is the recent work using longitudinal data in Australia from the Lifestyles of Our Kids study (LOOK), and the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LASC). Analysis of data from the LOOK study suggests the influence of modern societal attitudes to mood changes and social trends of habitual physical activity (Telford et al, 2013). Using data from the LASC, Vella et al (2014) examined relationships between a range of demographic and predictor variables concluded that gender, socio-demographics and parental support had a bearing on children’s participation in sport, and note the reasons for young people dropping out of physical activity were ambiguous. Their work also supported the use of the methods to examine participation in physical activity groupings such as organised sport, that enable
the simultaneous exploration of multi-level contributing factors (Vella et al., 2014).

Although the examination of causal relationships between different variables happens in closer detail, the discussion about what facets of this human endeavour contributes to habitual physical inactivity lacks attention to the affective response to being physically active.

Yet, although the causal relationship between physical activity and health in children and habitual physical activity and health in adults is hypothesised (Blair et al., as cited in Boreham and Riddoch, 2001), evidence for it remains inconclusive. Continuing to contribute to the discussion are increases in the population surveillance of physical activity using objective measures (Esliger & Tremblay, 2007).

2.3.1 Intensity of physical activity needed versus achieved for optimal health. While objective measurements, such as accelerometers, are the most accurate method of establishing energy expenditure, they are problematic inclusions in large cohort or longitudinal studies, and may be distracting or interruptive for participants in a qualitative study. Therefore, self-reported measures of physical activity are most commonly collected, and relatively few data are available on people’s actual energy output, particularly for children.

The different ways of describing levels of physical activity generally relate to the level of intensity or energy expended. Vigorous physical activity refers to the type of activity that causes a person to become out of breath and raise a sweat. Often referred to as the ‘huff and puff’ level, it occurs when maintaining a conversation is difficult. Moderate intensity of physical activity refers to the type of activity that causes a slight elevation of body temperature and heartbeat and raises a sweat. WHO recommends a combination of regular and varied physical activity as being most effective for most people, with adults (18-64 years) to do between 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity
physical activity per week, and muscle-strengthening activities for major muscle groups on at least two days of the week (World Health Organization, 2015). While the recommendation for children to be engaging in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity each day and strengthening activities at least three times per week remains (Department of Health, 2014a), the recommended level for adults doubled in 2014 to an accumulated 150–300 min over the course of a week. This includes 150-300 min of moderate or 75-150 min of vigorous intensity physical activity (Department of Health, 2014b). These segments of time can be broken down into smaller components (≥ 10 mins) to make the overall goal easier to achieve and is a useful strategy to adopt, especially for young people, as it seems to suit their age-related characteristics (Gilson, Cooke & Mahoney, 2001). Engagement in activities that promote and maintain muscle strength, bone health and flexibility is recommended for optimal growth and development in children.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare uses a combination of terms to describe levels of physical activity and shows four distinct levels (see Table 2.1). These levels also quantify the frequency of activity, providing further guidelines for application to everyday life situations. The role of ‘bursts’ of physical activity of at least 10 min is noted as having health-promoting benefits as well as being more achievable for some groups, with accumulated lifestyle physical activity considered a realistic way for people to achieve the recommended guidelines and promote life-long participation (Gilson, 2003).

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical activity level</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3 sessions at least average 40 min vigorous AND total of at least 1,500 MET min/week*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Time and Transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>3 sessions at least average 20 min vigorous OR 5 x 30 min moderate OR 6,000 MET min/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>some activity but not meeting recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>no activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *The standard metabolic equivalent, or MET, level. This unit is used to estimate the amount of oxygen used by the body during physical activity. One MET = the energy (oxygen) used by the body sitting quietly, perhaps while talking on the phone or reading a book. The harder the body works during the activity, the higher the MET (Begg et al., 2007, p. 184).*

Despite the value of these definitions, their use is more common in physical activity research in the field of exercise science than in public health research. The reliance in public health must rely on other more general descriptors such as vigorous, moderate, low/gentle and inactive/sedentary to describe levels of physical activity and provide respondents with examples of each to assist their selection of an appropriate level. Indeed, some now question the utility of the prescription of amounts and types of HEPA as a way of motivating people to be physically active. Segar and Richardson (2014), in particular, argue strongly for being active for pleasure, especially walking for pleasure, as a way of motivating people to be physically active rather than for ‘daily functioning and performance’ (p. 840). Hence the importance of bringing the discussion back to the nature and function or purpose of physical activity for individuals, rather than energy expenditure.

### 2.3.2 The functions of physical activity

Another way to understand physical activity is to examine its functions, which can help identify the areas of life that are most important for public health research, especially for policy development and health promotion and education.

Physical activity serves three primary functions: the maintenance of physical and mental health (biological function), social connectivity through specialist groups and clubs (social function), and the transmission of culture and values through games and pastimes (cultural function). Increasingly, physical activity serves an economic
function in modern economies, as shown in the growth of industries catering specifically for fitness, sport and recreation.

When considering the conduct of physical activity in relation to current health issues, Thorburn and Proietto (2000) identify three domains of physical activity: spontaneous, obligatory and voluntary. They associate spontaneous physical activity with daily life, including pursuits conducted for leisure (e.g., activities such as cycling or gardening); obligatory activity as being necessary for survival (e.g., food provision and transport); and voluntary physical activity as being formal exercise and that which is used for health maintenance (e.g., organised physical activities and team sports). The authors argue that the widespread use of labour-saving devices has largely eliminated obligatory physical activity in modern society. Voluntary physical activity in terms of formal exercise has little impact on overall expenditure of energy, a conclusion also made by other studies into physical activity, particularly in relation to school-aged children (Booth et al., 2006; Population Health Research Centre, 2007). Thorburn and Proietto (2000) therefore posit that spontaneous physical activity (engaged in for recreation or leisure) has become the major component of energy expended in physical activity. Paralleled by strategies designed by the International Obesity Task Force to increase such levels (Dixon & Broom, 2007; World Health Organization, 2006b), it is supported by the work of other researchers (such as Engstrom, 2004). It is therefore necessary to gain further understanding of what influences leisure-related physical activity.

2.3.3 Factors influencing levels of physical activity. Many researchers note an imbalance in research on the determinants of physical activity for leisure that focuses more on individual-level psychological and social variables than on policy and physical environmental variables (Humpel, Owen & Leslie, 2002; Sallis et al., 2006; Sallis et al.,
This is somewhat redressed by the growing attention paid to the combination of a variety of broader environmental features. However, urban planning and LTPA are identified as areas requiring deeper investigation (Giles-Corti, 2006; World Health Organization, 2006b) as well as the psychosocial determinants of participation in more physical active forms of leisure pursuits (Ryan, 2005) and the personal barriers to being active, particularly limited finances (Stanley & McCue, 2014) and physical self-perceptions (Gilson, Cooke & Mahoney, 2014).

Aspects of the physical environment such as neighbourhood type, accessibility and walkability are positively associated with physical activity for adult age groups (McCormack & Shiell, 2011). More specifically, being physically active in urban green space has shown to relate to better cardiovascular and mental health (Richardson, Pearce, Mitchell & Kingham, 2013).

There is growing evidence of the efficacy of various targeted health promotion interventions for increasing physical activity. Systemic reviews of these interventions provided a useful overview of the efficacy of certain known factors influencing physical activity behaviour. One review found that informational approaches, behavioural and social strategies, and combined environmental and policy strategies are particularly strong intervention mechanisms (Kahn et al., 2002). Another systematic review found that group-based interventions worked more effectively with adults than with children, and that common ingredients of successful interventions were counselling, education, incentives (especially providing access to opportunities) and having a theoretical model of behaviour change underpinning the conceptual framework of the intervention (Cleland et al., 2012).
The uptake of modern technologies is notably a major contributor to rising rates of physical inactivity. Implicated in much of today’s inadequate levels of physical activity in Australian children and young people is excessive sedentary leisure, such as passive television viewing and time spent using other forms of technologies (particularly computers) and small-screen devices (e.g., hand-held computer games, tablet devices and mobile phones) (Booth et al., 2006; Population Health Research Centre; 2007; Salmon, Booth, Phongsavan, Murphy & Timperio, 2007; Salmon, Campbell & Crawford, 2006). This could be argued to be increasingly relevant to all age groups, as similar relationships are evident in Australian studies of adults, which additionally highlight the relationship of low socio-economic status (SES) and area of residence with low levels of physical activity (Cameron et al., 2003; Wang & Beydoun, 2007; Women’s Health Australia, 2007).

2.3.3.1 Social perceptions of physical activity. Often overlooked are the perceptions of physical activity as sport and exercise. These are the dominant discourse for many people, and some survey instruments and respondents use these as proxies for physical activity. Neglected in the research findings are the emotional response and the meaning attached to each. While a known barrier to people exercising is time scarcity, other research pinpoints a lack of personal identification with being moderately-vigorously physically active and sometimes for organised fitness or exercise style arrangements (Dunn, Anderson & Jakicic, 1998; Gilson, Cooke & Mahoney, 2005). However, some studies explore this discourse specifically, and have found that these perceptions influence the participation of rural women, in particular, who identify themselves as being active (Lee & Macdonald, 2008).

Whilst the dominance of this discourse is understood to have historical roots in the way that sporting culture and physical education (PE) has been experienced
throughout Australian schooling, it is perpetuated through the media and commercial enterprises such as fitness centres. Challenging this way of thinking and responding is the emerging field of physical literacy, which reframes how the individual experiences physical activity. In doing so, it aims to increase the enjoyment of physical movement through competence and variety as a foundation for lifelong engagement in physical activity.

Key proponent Margret Whitehead (2010) provides a definition of physical literacy: ‘As appropriate to each individual’s endowment, physical literacy can be described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to maintain physical activity throughout the lifecourse’ (pp. 11–12). She further describes it as a ‘significant human capability’ (p. 5) and ‘the human potential that springs from our nature as embodied beings. It is a potential that encompasses the embodied-as-lived as well as the embodied-as-object’ (p. 11). Therefore, being physically literate in everyday life is about having the ‘levels and sophistication of physical competence and capability required for effective and efficient engagement in everyday, individual and organised activities’ (Whitehead, 2010, p. xv), and she extends the development of physical literacy as a concept to the way that PE is considered and taught in schools. The need to be both competent and confident in moving one’s body then necessitates experiencing a state of flow, or feeling natural, when moving.

2.3.3.2 Motivation to be physically active. Despite their different meanings, the use of the term motivation or motive is sometimes a proxy in the leisure and health literature for other terms such as enabler or facilitator. Motivation is about purpose or drive, whereas enablers refer to aspects that make possible, give power or means to, or
make possible or easy\(^1\). Put into context then, a reason for some people to walk regularly for 30 min, might be their motivation (or purpose) to be healthy. The things that actually help them achieve this (the enablers) might be the two friends they agree to meet and walk with, and because they live in close proximity to a local nature park and they all own sturdy walking shoes. Therefore, while two main motives reported for participation in physical activity are to be *health/fitness* and *enjoyment* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007b), they do not describe the things that necessarily help people to be active, and so are less instructive for the development of policy development and health promotion that aims to enhance levels of LTPA.

When it comes to understanding what drives individual practice, physical activity research uses various health behaviour theories to understand the motivations for participation. Three often-used theoretical models are Bandura’s social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1998, 2001, 2004; Dewar, Plotnikoff, Morgan, Okely, Costigan & Lubans, 2013), Ajzen’s theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991, 2001; Blue, Wilbur & Marston-Scott, 2001; Calogiuri & Chroni, 2014), and Ryan and Deci’s self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Teixeira, Carraça, Markland, Silva & Ryan, 2012). Each theoretical approach has its own particular characteristics and addresses different aspects of health behaviour. Specifically, SCT is used to explore self-efficacy (Ryan, 2005), the TPB framework is used to explain motivational processes and intention (Calogiuri & Chroni, 2014; Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; Plotnikoff, Lubans, Trinh & Craig, 2012), and SDT is increasingly used to understand self-motivation and personality as well as the contexts that help to foster them (Kahn et al., 2002; Teixeira, Carraça, Markland, Silva & Ryan, 2012). While the focus of each is

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\(^1\) As the opposite term, *inhibitors* refer to aspects that hinder or restrain (*Macquarie Concise Dictionary*, 2006).
important when viewing the context as a whole, SDT offers a specific way to understand the factor that is arguably most difficult to measure in the physical inactivity equation, namely, what actually motivates people.

With regard to self-motivation, Ryan and Deci describe three innate psychological needs that contribute to an individual’s self-motivation: the needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy (Kahn et al., 2002). They include the influence of affective responses (emotions or feelings) on participation in physical activity as articulated through SDT (Kahn et al., 2002) and complement other theories regarding the importance of elements such as skills, capability and confidence (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Whitehead, 2010).

Closely linked to ongoing participation with physical activity are feeling good about it and valuing it. A systematic review of 66 empirical studies involving SDT, adults and exercise behaviour conducted by Teixeira et al., (2012) found that autonomous self-regulating forms of motivation (whether intrinsic or extrinsic), such as individual utility or personal value, are positively linked to physical activity participation. Their review emphasises the importance of feeling positive about an activity in order to sustain ongoing participation, and strengthens the basis for a common sense approach to understanding the enablers for physical activity. The authors conclude that there is consistent supportive evidence that valuing the outcomes of exercise and valuing the actual experience of exercise contribute to the uptake and continuation of exercise participation respectively. In applying SDT to examining walking as a health behaviour, they note the contribution of affective neuroscience with regard to reward, and conclude that walking for pleasure in a eudemonic sense and for a meaningful life is a successful motivator and should be recommended for exercise rather than enumerated amounts of time or intensity. They comment, as others do, on
the need to re-educate or ‘re-socialize people’ (Segar & Richardson, 2014, p. 840) to notice and value the health benefits of physical activity, and call for further research into various biomedical and psychological aspects of motivation for improvements in health and wellbeing (Hoehner et al., 2008; Segar & Richardson, 2014; Teixeira et al., 2012).

Similarly, Segar and Richardson (2014) establish that ‘meaning-making behaviour’ is central to sustainable health behaviour. Through their example of walking for pleasure at the preferred rate of the individual, they provide a compelling case for the positive influence of autonomous forms of motivation that lead to actual sustained physical activity. Their review of studies emphasises the importance of feeling positive about walking in an individual’s decision to walk for physical activity.

Other research also notes the evidence for enjoyment as a strong determinant of participation and commitment to LTPA (Craike, 2008; Springer, Lamborn & Pollard, 2013) and the importance of self-efficacy and stage of life for being ready to engage with physical activity interventions (Parshau et al., 2012). Increasingly explored in other disciplines is the relationship between affective responses as a protective factor and perceptions of pain and fatigue on levels of being physically active. Applied to general active living research Moseley (2010) points out that the mechanisms involved in this are still unknown. His suggestion adds weight to the connections made by others about the influence of feelings about being active and its proxies of exercise, sport, active transport, and so on.

Bandura’s SCT measures have been used in a variety of studies to explore the psychosocial determinants of physical activity (Bandura, as cited in Ryan, 2005; Young, Plotnikoff, Collins, Callister & Morgan, 2015), and exercise self-efficacy is noted in the literature as being one of the most consistent and strongest predictors of exercise.
behaviour (Ryan, 2005; Sherwood et al., 2001). Measures of both efficacy and expectancy in relation to exercise have been used in conjunction with self-reported levels of physical activity to predict activity levels in certain populations—in the case of Ryan’s (2005) project, young adult Hispanic and White males and females—and to project sustainable lifelong patterns of exercise behaviour. In combination with cardiovascular fitness and participating in community sport, perceptions of physical competency for young women, and having active fathers for young men, are important to help individuals continue with physical activity as they transition into adulthood (Jose, Blizzard, Dwyer, McKercher & Venn, 2011; Morgan, Collins, Plotnikoff, Callister, Burrows, Fletcher, Okely, Young, Miller, Lloyd, Cook, Cruickshank, Saunders & Lubans, 2014).

Some researchers advocate exploring the reasons for physical inactivity through the SCT framework. The four categories incorporated in Bandura’s (1997) SCT framework relate to health-protective behaviours for self-efficacy beliefs (the enactment of specific behaviours), outcome expectancy beliefs (the likely consequences of such behaviours), proximal and distal goals (those that direct and regulate such behaviours), and intrapersonal and structural impediments (perceived barriers to behaviours). These categories are effective tools for identifying physical and mental health risks linked to inactivity at a population level (Ryan, 2005). However, more investigation needs to be done using combinations of behavioural theories to better understand the complexities of physical inactivity, dietary practices and related health issues, and interventions (Dewar, Plotnikoff, Morgan, Okely, Costigan & Lubans, 2013; Lloyd, Lubans, Plotnikoff & Morgan, 2014).

Overall, contributions from psychological literature in the areas of motivation, experience and behavioural theory show convincing evidence of the pivotal role of
positive experiences in developing sustainable health behaviour. When applied to physical activity behaviour and linked with the affective response and autonomy, the two concepts of flow and physical literacy are sympathetic with the ideals of the leisure experience.

2.3.3.3 Social and environmental influences on physical activity. The social and physical characteristics of specific geographical contexts (such as neighbourhoods) are increasingly recognised as important inclusions in the methods used to research the determinants of physical activity and related health behaviours (Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; Giles-Corti, Timperio, Bull & Pikora, 2005; Wendel-Vos et al., 2007). However, ways to determine how social and physical environments encourage physical activity practices vary. Indeed, an increased focus on intrapersonal factors within multilevel studies in physical activity is recognised as being pivotal to understanding the motivations of individuals for their participation more fully.

Systematic reviews of studies investigating determinants of physical activity among adults establish a number of factors important for facilitating health-enhancing levels of participation. Humpel et al.’s (2002) review of 19 quantitative studies found significant associations between physical activity and accessibility, opportunities and aesthetic qualities. In their review of 47 observational studies, Wendel-Vos et al. (2007) used the analysis grid for environments linked to obesity (ANGELO) framework to classify environmental factors and found that a mixture of social and physical environmental features influenced the physical activity of adults. Seen as ‘likely important determinants’ for different types and intensities of physical activity ranging from sedentary to vigorous physical activities, these features include social support and having another person with which to be physically active. Whereas the availability of physical activity equipment and the connectivity of trails for active commuting was
noted as being a ‘convincing environmental determinant’ for different types and intensities of physical activity (p. 432).

When examining aspects of people’s immediate environment that influences their health, Veenstra et al. (2005) noted the associations between social capital and spatially defined communities (neighbourhoods) and overall health measures. They argue that neighbourhood characteristics might influence the health effects of social capital (particularly the social networks involved in belonging to a voluntary association). The authors build on the research linking local area deprivation to the social determinants of health and suggest that the social networks provided through voluntary associations have a positive effect, not just on social capital, but on overall health and wellbeing. They also note a need for more research into this type of association.

The combined works of a number of researchers suggest that social networks influence health behaviour to have either positive or negative physical as well as mental health outcomes. In their evaluation of the social networks of over 12,000 participants in the Framingham Heart Study, Christakis and Fowler (2007) concluded that social ties and the network phenomena link to the health behaviour characteristic in obesity. Other researchers have noted similar associations, although not as definitively, and concur that more research needs to be done to assess their effects.

In particular, a review of major studies concerning the environmental correlates of physical activity and walking showed that access to facilities for physical activity (convenient and close) in high-density urban areas is reasonably consistently associated with physical activity and walking generally (Bauman & Bull, 2007). Similarly correlated were perceptions of safety and access to exercise equipment and footpaths (Bauman & Bull, 2007).
A range of individual studies also using ecological frameworks show perceived barriers to levels of participation to be lack of time and motivation (such as Cerin, Leslie, Sugiyama & Owen, 2010) and contributed to by fatigue (such as Singhal & Siddhu, 2014). In particular, the personal, social and environmental barriers to LTPA highlight that major personal barriers to physical activity are constraints around work, time and personal energy levels. Specifically, a lack of time and motivation, compounded by feeling tired after work and having insufficient opportunities to exercise during the working day reduce the likelihood of individuals being active. In terms of social barriers, the most common response is the lack of a partner to exercise with, followed by the influence of inactive family and friends. Environmental factors affecting participation were less significant but were mainly related to local conditions specific to the area studied and included in this case unattended dogs, high levels of pollution and a lack of public places in which to be active near home e.g., parks or gardens (Singhal & Siddhu, 2014).

The important effects of the combination of people and place, however, continue to be reinforced by researchers such as Giles-Corti (2006; Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002), and of the ways that the natural and built environment can shape the levels and types of physical activity, by researchers such as Sallis et al. (2002), Kaczynski and Henderson (2007), and Inoue et al. (2009). The popularity of spontaneous physical activity coupled with the distances travelled between home and leisure pursuits is especially relevant for those living in rural locations and those for whom mobility is problematic, such as people in low socio-economic positions, the aged, the young, those with disabilities, and families with young children.

2.3.3.4 Identifying environments that promote sedentary lifestyles. Given that the environmental features known to influence physical activity behaviour occur in a
broader sociocultural, political and environmental context, it is logical to examine 
conceptualisations of environments that attempt to measure the reasons for health 
behaviours and try to account for their occurrence. Methods of measuring and recording 
the quantity and quality of features in the environment vary in the literature; more 
attention is generally paid to enumeration of features from the built environment 
(presumably to inform and influence local government spending on these facilities) than 
to actual usage patterns, preferences or user rationales. Of the range of audit tools noted 
in the literature, two used in particular attempt to rigorously audit environments and 
attempt to record and analyse physical and social aspects of the complexity: the 
ANGELO framework and the Quality of Public Open Space Tool (POST).

2.3.3.4.1 Policy and physical environments. The obesogenic environment is one 
of the conceptualisations described as promoting health-damaging lifestyles (Faskunger 
& Hemmingsson, 2002; Swinburn et al., 1999; Wendel-Vos et al., 2007), by 
encouraging the intake of energy and discouraging energy expenditure through an 
abundance of energy-dense foods, sedentary lifestyle and labour-saving technologies 
(Dixon & Broom, 2007; Swinburn et al., 1999). As a causal theory for the rising global 
rates of obesity, it is identified as being the most in accord with social policy thinking 
by the Food and Agriculture Organization (as cited in Lang & Rayner 2007, p. 170).
The emphasis here is on the environment being abnormal and obesity being a ‘normal 
physiological response’ (p. 170).

This emphasis on the environmental determinants of obesity, rather than on 
genetic or other individual factors, enables exploration of the interconnected aspects of 
the environment that influence behaviour both at an individual level and at a societal 
level. Additionally, Dixon and Broom (2007) highlight the need for a greater emphasis
on understanding the contributions of the social actors and processes involved in the creation of the obesogenic environment.

As leisure pursuits often include dietary practices, the theory of an obesogenic environment assists with exploring the interplay between dietary and physical activity options from macro- and microenvironmental settings in specific places. Table 2.2 shows the main components of the ANGELO grid developed by Swinburn et al. (1999). The development of instruments such as the ANGELO grid help with this task (Swinburn et al., 1999) and are useful as frameworks for understanding and collating key features of the contexts in which individuals live and to analyse information about that context in a structured fashion.

**Table 2.2**

*Sample outline of ANGELO grid*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Sociocultural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microenvironmental (settings)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroenvironmental (sectors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Developed as a part of a larger study, POST is one of the audit tools that detail activity categories and facilities for all age groups in the community (Sunarja, Wood & Giles-Corti, 2008). The types of activities recorded in the audit tool relate to walking, cycling, active play, formal sports and relaxation and picnicking for all age groups, people with disabilities and pet owners. Information collected on the general principles of size and proximity, socialising, safety, aesthetics, maintenance and miscellaneous items in a structured survey. Added to information obtained from local and state
government data sets is data from the audit tool. Elements creating ‘liveable
neighbourhoods’ are characterised in the POST audit and then each is counted and
described according to a prescribed audit sheet. The tool is quite detailed for physical
activity usage, covering active-formal usage (as a proxy for formal sports), active-
informal usage (for unstructured, informal physical activity), and passive usage (for
space where there are no facilities designed for physical activity (Lange, Giles-Corti &
Broomhall, 2004; Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002).

2.3.3.5 Effects of area disadvantage. While much of the literature on the
determinants of LTPA focuses on a selection of factors that are relatively
straightforward to measure (such as self-reported time, activities, facilities and
services), an increasing number of frameworks are being developed for understanding
the broader environment in which people spend the bulk of their time. The intention of
these frameworks is to expose inequities in access and quality of facilities and services
due to area disadvantage. The frameworks developed by Macintyre and Ellaway (2000)
are particularly useful for understanding the complexity with an environment, and the
more comparative outlook described by Dixon and Welch (2000) that compels
researchers to examine health inequities between rural and metropolitan areas.

Developed from their own research in West Scotland, Macintyre and Ellaway
(2000) present a useful ecological framework for understanding reasons for area
disadvantage. They incorporate types of features from local areas that may influence
health outcomes.

They included the following five features:

- physical features of the environment shared by all residents in a locality;
- availability of healthy environment at home, work, and play;
services provided, publicly or privately, to support people in their daily lives;

- sociocultural features of a neighbourhood; and

- the reputation of an area (Macintyre & Ellaway, 2000).

The challenge posed by Dixon and Welch (2000) is to understand the many dimensions of place for rural and urban areas and how these influence health and health practices in these areas. Their consideration of the importance of place and of rurality proposes another dimension to the accepted explanations for health inequalities between urban and rural populations of SES, environmental factors, risk-taking behaviours, access to services and psychosocial factors. An additional barrier to physical activity faced by those on low incomes is the complex interactions of economic preferences and risk associated with behaviour change (Leonard et al., 2013). When an individual is on a low income, any behaviour change, such as becoming more physically active, requires a much more detailed configuration of choices and therefore risks than such change requires for someone on a higher income (Leonard et al., 2013).

It follows, then, that it is important to devise a research framework for the exploration of enablers and inhibitors of LTPA that includes a mix of social, cultural, policy and environmental features relating to an individual’s immediate and general neighbourhood context. Macintyre and Ellaway (2000) suggest that this will progress the discussion towards more holistic explorations of and solutions to persistent health issues, such as physical inactivity in contemporary society.

2.4 Summary of Literature

Overall, my review of the literature highlights the subtle nature of the LTPA experience itself as being central to being active. In particular, it highlights gaps in our knowledge related to the emotional attachment people of all ages have with physical
activity, and of the influence of previous involvement with physical activity and current participation. Gaps are also evident in our knowledge of how young adults understand and experience physical activity and the influence of intergenerational understandings and practices of families. Although more exploration of the effects of area disadvantage for rural residents, knowledge about how this subsequently influences the physical activity of young adults lack clarity.

In addition, the dual experience of being active whilst being at leisure is contradictory for adults and is arguably more so for young adults. The duality of this experience is understandably different for each person. It relates to how individuals respond to a combination of neighbourhood characteristics, policy factors, physical environments, and familial and broader social, cultural and economic situations. It also relates to psychological concepts involving flow and affective responses with regard to motivation, and having the physical literacy and agency to understand the importance of health maintenance and the mechanisms to achieve this.

As well as helping to understand the problem of LTPA, the literature provided guidance for the development of a conceptual framework and investigative tools for conducting further research in the area. To help understand the health inequity between rural and urban population, my research project needed to include ways to investigate the differences and similarities between these two types of areas, and the experiences of those living in each. The development of a research design aiming to understand the influences of LTPA practice should acknowledge multiple aspects of the individual as well as their context. Where possible, it should aim to ascertain whether it is a health-enhancing environment by analysing the physical activity habits of individuals within their context. Given that levels of physical activity include low or no activity (sedentary) levels, any examination of physical activity in leisure time necessarily takes
Time and Transitions

into account sedentary leisure options as well, and so acknowledging them in the analysis of environments is a holistic approach.

It is logical to develop a study that examines the health behaviour of LTPA and seeks to understand it from the direct experience of individuals in the context of their social, political and physical environments. Evidence from the literature also supports the inclusion of behavioural theories when investigating the rationale behind an individual’s action.

Guided by the literature on ways of investigating the leisure and physical activity practices of individuals, and the different environments in which such practices occurs, this research project was designed to closely examine how and why individuals interact within these environments. In doing so, and with a focus on the young adult age group, I expected to understand more deeply why people do what they do for their LTPA and what they use to assist them—what enables and inhibits their LTPA.
Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the methodological framework and specific research methods used in this study. In doing so, it explains the interpretative approach used for the research, and specifically the socio-ecological framework developed for the study design. This chapter also outlines the strategies used for recruitment and the analytical methods used for data collection, as well as the scope and limitations of the project. I also include brief profiles of each of the fieldwork sites as a way of introducing the characteristics of each area and highlight the differences in demographics, culture and geography experienced by the participants in my study—where they lived and played.

3.2 Research Aims

The overarching aim of this research is to identify and explore social and environmental influences of LTPA of young adults in order to understand what enables and inhibits their LTPA. In order to determine whether there are factors that may be specific to a type of area, this research examined data from three contrasting locations.

My project is primarily concerned with why individuals engage in LTPA in the way that they do, as well as what they do and how they integrate it in their everyday lives. With the broader discourse of the effects of consumerism as a backdrop, economic factors and consumption practices are included in this project. Their inclusion allowed me to investigate how the consumption of leisure-related goods and services may influence LTPA.

With these objectives in mind, the adoption of an interpretative approach enabled me to investigate the two main research questions for this research:

1. What socio-demographic, socio-economic, psychosocial and environmental factors are associated with the LTPA of young adults?
2. How do the consumer practices related to leisure interact with individual-level factors and circumstances to enable or inhibit healthy levels of leisure-related physical activity?

3.3 Interpretive Research

Qualitative researchers strive to illuminate our understanding of the world using a wide range of approaches and associated investigative tools (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Qualitative methods make visible how people go about and interpret their daily lives. The researcher aims to shed light on topics using particular research practices such as case studies, visual texts, observations, historical accounts, interviews and discussions. Often, such approaches also open up perspectives on areas not initially identified, generating additional (and sometimes unexpected) understandings.

An interpretative approach is designed to generate a deeper understanding of a complex problem, and as Neuman (2006) explains, adopts the ‘systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds’ (p.88). In selecting this approach to investigate the influences that contribute to the declining rates of physical activity of young adults my intention was to help generate constructive recommendations for public health policy. To render the findings useful for policy and practice, I also sought to include the policy and the physical environment as well as the socio-demographic and individual-level factors and circumstances in the overarching study design.

Collecting data from participants through in-depth interviews and focus groups enabled me to capture the lived experience of individuals and tease out descriptive elements, such as rationales and value systems. The line of questioning enabled participants to reflect on their past experiences and connect to their current leisure and
physical activity practices. As an iterative process, it was helpful in developing themes for later analysis. Combined with a detailed recording of the general neighbourhood characteristics of each study site, these methods generated a more holistic understanding of the participants’ narrative than one method alone would have provided. Because of the potential for ethical and logistic challenges, I did not attempt direct observations of participants at leisure, nor did I include the keeping of a physical activity diary. To assure participants of their privacy and comfort, the interviews and focus groups were conducted in a place of their choosing. For some participants, the reflective nature of the process of the interview and focus group seemed to have had the additional effect of enriching their understanding of their own context and LTPA practices.

3.3.1 The socio-ecological framework. Much like an ecosystem in nature, a socio-ecological framework acknowledges complexity at multiple levels. Such frameworks map out or explain, often diagrammatically, the interconnections between many related factors influencing the problem. These frameworks typically include societal factors, environmental features, community contexts, personal relationships and individual-level factors to explain how the interrelationships operate as causal mechanisms. They help researchers both explore and explain the health outcome, which in turn informs intervention strategies, health promotion and policymaking as recommended by WHO for designing approaches to public health research (Forde & Raine, 2008). Most importantly, the use of a socio-ecological framework acknowledges the evidence that multiple factors (rather than any single factor) influence health practices. Within the areas of physical activity research, there is growing recognition of the utility of ecological and socio-ecological frameworks that incorporate multiple levels of influence, and multiple factors within each level, to create what may be seen to mimic (or model) the social and environmental influences being researched (Dewar et
Time and Transitions

al., 2014; Forde & Raine, 2008; Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; King & Sallis, 2009; Sallis et al., 2006; Vella et al., 2014). For this reason, it allows the investigation of the role and utility of consumer practices as a motivator for respondents in the study.

It was outside of the scope of this PhD study to incorporate all the known factors at multiple levels influencing physical activity. Instead, I developed a study design that acknowledged the four main areas identified from the health and related literature that focused on observations of the field: social/agent networks (Christakis & Fowler, 2007; Veenstra et al., 2005), the built and natural environment and neighbourhood characteristics (Ball, 2006; Cutts, Darby, Boone & Brewis, 2009; Giles-Corti, 2006; Inoue et al., 2009; Johnson-Taylor & Everhart, 2006; Kaczynski & Henderson, 2007; Sallis et al., 2009), the policy environment (Swinburn et al., 1999) and personal history and circumstances (Bourdieu, 1977). These four categories are sufficiently broad to allow for deeper interrogation using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Using approaches drawn from these areas, I was able to consider individual viewpoints (from each participant’s point of view during interviews), collective viewpoints (during different focus groups), political viewpoints (through interviews with members of the local council) and a more physical view through ethnographic means (my own recording and categorising of the field through photographs and collection of other artefacts).

Social networks enable the spread of many different phenomena. Researchers, for example, have shown the strength of the contributions of social networks to major health issues, including obesity and cardiovascular (Christakis & Fowler, 2007) and social capital (Veenstra et al., 2005). Social networks (otherwise known as agent networks) provide structures for showing connections between individuals, and between individuals and groups within a cohort or specific geographical context (such as
Time and Transitions

neighbourhoods). An analysis of these networks helps to explain the foundations of the phenomena.

Less understood is the influence of personal history and circumstance as a potential group of correlates of LTPA. Whilst the correlations between socio-demographics and health outcomes are evident from quantitative data collected at the population level, researchers need to know more about the mechanisms for individual choices for physical activity. Being able to analyse the interactions between mechanisms driving personal choice, an individual’s circumstances and their personal history helps to explain aspects of health behaviour (Ball, 2006).

3.4 Factors Included in the Study Design

The built and natural environment and neighbourhood characteristics are important in physical activity research for their focus on ‘place’ (Giles-Corti, 2006). The characteristics of these places have an important effect on the motivations and capacity of individuals to engage in a range of physical activities (Inoue et al., 2009; Kaczynski & Henderson, 2007; Sallis et al., 2002). The physical and social characteristics of specific geographical contexts (neighbourhoods) are increasingly recognised as important elements in research methods for determinants of physical activity (Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; Humpel et al., 2002; Wendel-Vos et al., 2007) and health in general (Dixon & Welch, 2000). Australian research gives additional attention to the relative importance of potential intrapersonal, social and environmental correlates of physical activity in order to understand the motivations of participants (Ball, 2006).

3.5 Study Design

A socio-ecological framework for understanding the interactions between individual-level factors and circumstances, and the broader cultural and economic-level
factors within which these operate underpins the research design. The overlapping
spheres in Figure 3.1 illustrate connections or interactions within the data represented in
two broad categories.

Based on the main research questions, the components of the design reflect both
the level of complexity inherent in physical activity (identified in Chapter 2), and the
scope to explore other novel aspects. While it does include some quantitative analysis, it
is essentially a qualitative cross-sectional analysis of the enablers and inhibitors of
LTPA aimed at a particular target group, and across contrasting specific geographic
contexts.

**Figure 3.1.** Conceptual framework for investigating the socio-ecological determinants
of LTPA and uncovering the enablers and inhibitors for LTPA.

Table 3.1 categorises the investigative tools used during data collection in
relation to the individual-level factors and circumstances identified in the health
literature.
Table 3.1

*Investigative Tools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychosocial factors</th>
<th>Environmental factors</th>
<th>Socio-economic factors</th>
<th>Socio-demographic factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant interviews</td>
<td>Environmental audit (photos, maps, artefacts, listings)</td>
<td>Closed questions Participant interviews</td>
<td>Closed questions Participant interviews Environmental audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key informant interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purposes of this study, a young adult is within the range of 18–30 years, extending the ABS definition of 18–24 years. Making this extension ensured the recruitment of suitable participants, especially in the rural area, where it limited recruitment was anticipated. It is also an acknowledgement of the trend in Australia to delay parenting.

### 3.6 Fieldwork Locations: Where and Why

The selected study sites for this research project are marked on the map in Figure 3.2. The selection of the rural area of Gin Gin, the outer-metropolitan area of Beenleigh and the inner-metropolitan area of South Brisbane was based on their relative proximity to the central business district (CBD) of Brisbane, Queensland’s capital city. I also used the ABS definition for rural and city as guides for the selection process and information from the ABS Basic Community Profiles for creating an area profile for each. The ABS classifies people as ‘rural’ if they live within a ‘bounded locality’ (where there is a population cluster of between 200 and 999 people), and considers them ‘non-urban’. By contrast, an urban centre has a population cluster of more than 1,000 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b).
Table 3.2 presents a comparison of basic demographic information. It highlights differences in population size, distance from Brisbane City, median age, median income, average household size, highest level of education and employment rates.
Table 3.2

Basic Demographic Data for Each Fieldwork Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rural (Gin Gin)</th>
<th>Outer-metropolitan (Beenleigh)</th>
<th>Inner-metropolitan (South Brisbane)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>943 (region pop. 5,000)</td>
<td>8,000 (region pop. 54,000)</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from Brisbane City</td>
<td>380 km</td>
<td>34 km</td>
<td>1 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>45 years</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>$669 per week ($34,788 per annum)</td>
<td>$402 per week ($20,904 per annum)</td>
<td>$509 per week ($26,468 per annum)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from Queensland Regional Profiles: Kolan, by the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2011, Brisbane, Queensland Treasury, p. 44; Queensland Regional Profiles: Beenleigh Area Region, by the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2011, Brisbane: Queensland Treasury, p. 43; Queensland Regional Profiles: South Brisbane Region, by the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2011, Brisbane: Queensland Treasury, p. 43.

3.7 Data Collection

I collected data during a series of field site visits over three separate occasions in the last six months of 2008. The inclusion of localities within close proximity to the central study sites was important to ensure sufficient numbers during recruitment. Each episode of fieldwork involved between three and four weeks of combined recruitment and data collection and included interviews, focus groups and environmental audits. With the exception of a focus group in the inner-metropolitan area, all these types of data were collected from all three study sites. The Australian National University (ANU) Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethics approval and I collected all data as principal researcher.
I conducted the interviews and focus groups at a time and venue convenient for participants, audio recorded and subsequently transcribed by myself or outsourced to appropriate third parties. I then cleaned and validated transcripts myself. I entered closed-question data into an Excel spreadsheet and stored the interview transcripts as Word files for analysis. Environmental data in the form of digital photographs and documents available from the public domain were stored either digitally or manually as appropriate.

### 3.8 Overview of Data Analysis

The different data collected for this research project required various types and levels of analysis. Preliminary analysis of the interview data involved creating summary tables for responses to each interview question. This process identified key themes and
emergent patterns within the responses. These key themes and patterns guided the
development of a coding scheme used to interrogate the interview transcripts. The
environmental audit data were analysed using a combination of quantitative and
qualitative methods, including enumerations of neighbourhood characteristics and
descriptive statistics. I used basic descriptive statistics to analyse the socio-demographic
data collected from the closed questions and government websites for each site.

3.8.1 The target group. I based the boundaries for the target group for this study on participant age, parenting status, employment type and area of residency. Participants were required to live within the region of the study sites, be aged between 18 and 30 years, have no dependent children, be in sedentary employment, and be either studying or unemployed. These parameters were set in light of the confounding factors for LTPA identified in the literature: factors such as caring responsibilities, area of residence and previous exertion or fatigue from physical activity in the workplace. Extending the age limit to 30 years was necessary for the rural field site, where young adults tend to move to city areas for work or study, creating difficulties in recruiting enough 18–24 year olds in an already small population.

3.8.2 Sample size. The sample size of 20 participants per study site was suitable for both practical and methodological reasons. As well as being manageable for a single investigator, the sample size was sufficient to provide saturation of the data (Neuman, 2006). Key informants interviewed included the local member for council from each study site, youth group leaders and a community member. The interviewing of key informants was restricted to a small number for practical reasons.

3.8.3 Ethics. The development of protocols for recruitment was in consultation with my research supervisors and approved by the ANU Ethics Committee for Human Research. Gaining informed consent was a central requirement for all interviews and
focus groups. When taking photographs in public spaces for the environmental audit I took care to highlight the characteristics of the place rather than focus on individuals within the spaces. This also served to preserve the anonymity of the public during data collection.

3.8.4 Recruitment. Recruitment of participants for fieldwork in this study followed a sequential sampling strategy involving snowballing, stratified, maximum variation and convenience sampling and some opportunistic sampling. The aim was to generate variation and rich data within each study site (Bailey, 2007). Descriptions of each recruitment strategy and examples from the fieldwork in this study are included in Table 3.3.
### Table 3.3

**Purposive Sampling Strategies Used During Fieldwork**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposive sampling strategies</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples of recruitment strategies used from this fieldwork</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snowballing or chain sampling</td>
<td>Recruitment of cases as they are referred by other participants</td>
<td>Referrals by gatekeepers Referrals by other research participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratified or deviant case sampling</td>
<td>Selection of cases from different subgroups</td>
<td>Recruitment in areas differentiated by SEP and interest areas, e.g., TAFE and university campuses, shopping centres, public parkland (skate park) Use of flyers &amp; blog site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum variation sampling</td>
<td>Selection of cases from different subgroups</td>
<td>Focus groups from a range of interest areas, e.g., faith based, non-faith based, small friendship groups, small family groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience sampling</td>
<td>Selection of cases from an easily accessed group or place</td>
<td>Recruiting individual participants from the focus groups Recruiting from particular places of employment, e.g., café, grocery store, leisure facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunistic sampling</td>
<td>Use of cases or situations that unexpectedly become available to the researcher</td>
<td>Flyers Blog site ‘Cold-calling’ techniques mostly by phone and email but sometimes face-to-face, e.g., employees in businesses, skate parks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


#### 3.8.5 Sampling and bias

Preliminary advice from gatekeepers (people who worked in a teaching, community development or a chaplaincy role) in all three of the study sites was that young adults would be difficult to recruit. Of particular concern would be locating a range of rural young adults without children who have remained within the rural locality. Locals advised me that young adults who remained in the rural area held a wide variety of jobs, and I should recruit initially through church leaders and a few main employers (mainly the local grocery store, takeaway food outlets and public bars). From initial discussions with gatekeepers, then, it seemed feasible that this strategy would find participants through church youth groups or particular small
businesses in town, but was not likely to achieve enough range or variety of ideas from one specific source. Therefore, I needed to incorporate snowballing and sequential techniques until saturation had occurred.

I used both snowball and deviant case sampling strategies in each fieldwork area to recruit young adult participants for both focus groups and individual interviews, and purposive strategies to recruit key informant interviewees. This meant using print-based materials (a flyer), electronic sources (a blog site), media releases designed for print-based news and radio outlets, and referrals from gatekeepers in each area.

To minimise further the possibility of bias arising from the placement of recruitment information, I distributed the same flyers in as many publicly accessible places as was permitted at the time, for example, public libraries, tertiary education institutions, retail outlets, community notice boards and places of leisure (public and commercial). Where required, I obtained the permission of the operators and centre management.

I aimed marketing material at young adults and included a request for participation in both a focus group and an individual interview. I anticipated that participants would initially gather for a focus group and then I would arrange a suitable date and time for an individual interview. In the recruitment information, I offered basic tokens of appreciation in the form of a gift voucher or movie ticket.

I recruited the key informants directly through email or phone introductions, and sourced members of the local council through local government websites and the other informants through referrals from a gatekeeper in the respective community. (I offered no tokens of appreciation to key informants or members of council.)
3.9 Description of Recruitment Tools

Overall, I created three different recruitment tools. The combined effects of the recruitment flyers, media releases and a blog enabled me to cast my recruitment net widely:

1. Recruitment flyer:
   a. A4 sized flyers had tear-off strips at the bottom.
   b. I placed copies in as many public places as permissible by law.

2. Media releases:
   a. I co-developed media releases with the ANU Media Relations staff, who then sent them on my behalf to print and radio media outlets in each area.

   a. I developed and maintained a blog site to provide a familiar access point for young adults and an interactive way of engaging with potential participants and participating individuals.
   b. I monitored and updated the site throughout the six-month period in which data collection took place.

The intention was to recruit a maximum of 20 young adults from a variety of backgrounds in each area. Gaining access to individuals and groups in each study area was often dependent on gatekeepers that I had known prior to the research or with whom I had established contact particularly for the purposes of this study. These gatekeepers provided me with direct contact with individual young adults as well as introductions to places of employment for young adults from where I could recruit people. This was particularly important in the rural area where the community, although friendly, were more hesitant to participate in a research study conducted by someone from outside of their community. Some gatekeepers contributed to my study in
additional capacities where appropriate, as key informants and, in one case, as both a key informant and a young adult participant.

To minimise the risk of an over-representation of health-conscious participants (particularly regarding physical activity or weight status), the recruitment information reflected the broader scope of attitudes to leisure and leisure experiences rather than leisure time physical activity. Similarly, the advertising material did not include references or inferences to obesity or obesogenic environments. I anticipated that this strategy would not influence participants either way of my underlying interest in physical activity. Indeed, this approach served to broaden the scope of my thinking to consider leisure as a contextual backdrop rather than simply a type of time that people would use.

To maintain consistency, I conducted the recruitment strategy process in a similar manner in each study site. Throughout the fieldwork, I monitored and updated the blog site with upcoming dates and statements of appreciation to existing research participants generally. Each of the recruitment strategies yielded different numbers of participants in each of the fieldwork sites. The most successful strategy was snowballing after initial contact with a gatekeeper. The next most successful strategy was the direct method of ‘cold-calling’ in workplaces, followed by the recruitment flyers. Figure 3.3 shows the difference in yields between recruitment strategies.

A more focused approached was used for recruiting key informants, as they were sought out for specific information about policy and planning relevant to leisure and young adults, as well as social trends for leisure and young adults. These informants were the local member for council in each study site and other community or recreation leaders where appropriate or referred by a gatekeeper (only one prospective key informant declined the invitation to participate). For each fieldwork area, I approached
potential key informants initially by email and then phone (via personal assistants in the case of councillors). I contacted local councillors initially through their personal assistants and thereafter by direct email or phone contact.
Figure 3.3. Summary of participant yields for focus groups, key informant and participant interviews using all recruitment strategies employed during fieldwork.
I was able to recruit and interview the desired 20 young adult participants as well as the political key informants, thereby providing a sound base for a general comparative analysis across the three field sites. Table 3.4 provides a breakdown of the number of participants recruited by categories of field site, age subgroup and gender. Overall, the split of females and males was fairly even, and more participants aged 18–24 years old than those aged 25–30 years old.

Table 3.4

*Participant Numbers by Subgroups of Age, Gender and Area of Residence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field site</th>
<th>Female 18–24 years</th>
<th>Male 18–24 years</th>
<th>Female 25–30 years</th>
<th>Male 25–30 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural (n = 20)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer-metro (n = 21)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner-metro (n = 20)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotals</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.9.1 Interviews. I conducted two types of interviews: interviews with young adults resident in the study areas (participant interviews) and interviews with key informants from each area (local councillors, gatekeepers and referred community advocates). I designed all interviews as in-depth, semi-structured, and to take approximately 60 min to conduct.

3.9.1.1 Participant interviews. The primary aim of the interviews with the young adult participants was to identify and explore motivators and barriers to the LTPA of the interviewees. Secondary aims were to establish the participants’ individual
Time and Transitions backgrounds (their upbringing, attitudes and experience of leisure through their lives), a sense of their values regarding time and money for leisure, and their aspirations for leisure into the future.

Prior to the interview, I asked the participants to complete a brief list of closed questions relating to their socio-economic and socio-demographic status. I confirmed information from this both at the beginning and throughout the interview. Each set of responses was de-identified for analysis and linked by field codes to corresponding interview data, entered into an Excel spreadsheet and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The results contributed to background information about each participant, for example, income, role in the household, work or study status, and levels of education as well as demographic profiles for each study site.

The interview itself began with a confirmation of these personal details as well as their understanding of the aims of the interview. The interview was a series of open-ended questions relating to the participants’ individual understandings and practices of leisure and LTPA. It incorporated dimensions of time and money spent on leisure as well as their aspirations for leisure. Interviewing time averaged about 60 min and ranged from approximately 20 to 100 min in duration. Each participant chose the venue for their interview, usually their home or a public location such as a café, and each agreed to have their interviewed audio recorded. Either an appropriate third party or I transcribed recordings. I then, validated and cleaned each one by listening to the audio recordings and crosschecking the transcripts, adjusting typographical errors where necessary. After doing so, I de-identified the transcripts and assigned pseudonyms.

Audio files from all interviews were transcribed, de-identified and assigned field codes corresponding to their study site and interview type and individual identification number. This field code mirrored the code linking their interview data to their
questionnaire data; for example, RIP10 refers to rural interview participant number 10, and RPQ10 refers to the same participant’s closed-question responses. Key informants were also assigned field codes along the same principles; for example, RKI02 referred to rural key informant number two. Transcripts were verbatim; however, they did not include pauses, ums, errs, intonations, and so, and were checked for accuracy by me. I maintained full confidentiality of both audio files and transcripts by keeping them secure in a locked facility on the ANU campus and on computers with password protection. With the exception of the three local council members, I assigned young adult participants and other key informants pseudonyms.

Analysis of the participant interview transcripts was conducted manually using thematic coding and summary tables to manage the data. I used a process of deductive coding and then inductive coding to interrogate the interview data more thoroughly. I devised thematic codes based on my primary research questions and then used inductive analysis using a set of secondary thematic codes developed throughout the interviewing process and the preliminary analysis of the interview data.

The line of inquiry for these interviews covered the personal history, leisure practices over time, understandings and experiences of leisure, expenditure on leisure, and aspirations for leisure of the interviewee, as outlined in Table 3.5. Thematically organised in this way, participant interviews contributed data for two of the main areas from the health and related literature identified in section 3.5, social/agent networks, and personal history and circumstances. This complimented the data collected for the neighbourhood characteristics and policy environment. A complete version of the questions is included in Appendix E. The content of the closed questions covered 15 relevant socio-economic and demographic aspects for each individual. The final question asked how the participant heard about the study and was useful for confirming
the most successful recruitment strategies and understanding bias in the sample. A copy of the closed questions is available in Appendix F.
Table 3.5

Summary of Themes Covered in Participant Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question theme (PA &amp; sedentary)</th>
<th>Question content (PA &amp; sedentary)</th>
<th>Factors addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current context</td>
<td>Type work/study</td>
<td>Socio-demographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure outside of work/study</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions in life and effects on leisure</td>
<td>Personal history</td>
<td>Psychosocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School experiences &amp; changes</td>
<td>Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understandings of leisure</td>
<td>What is leisure</td>
<td>Psychosocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where developed idea from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is leisure for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current experiences of leisure</td>
<td>Enough leisure</td>
<td>Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do when at leisure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes since youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples of pa &amp; pia leisure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations for leisure</td>
<td>Change it</td>
<td>Psychosocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence to try new leisure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs of leisure</td>
<td>Costs of leisure</td>
<td>Socio-economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Future purchases</td>
<td>Consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of purchases for experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for time or money for leisure</td>
<td>Prefer time or money if offered &amp; why</td>
<td>Socio-economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Psychosocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other comments</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.9.2 Recall bias. Recall bias and the possible effects of the interview process are always a consideration when interviewing individuals about their lives. It is possible that participants will alter their initial response to questions to accord with what they believe are the researcher’s agenda. With this in mind, I took measures to minimise bias through careful instrument design (e.g., designing clarifying questions that reframed questions throughout the interview to help validate previous responses) as well as presenting the study focus as being broadly on leisure (rather on LTPA) and employing a variety of recruitment strategies.

The offer of a small remuneration (choice of a $30 movie card or gift card) to the young adults for their participation in an interview may have created a small amount of bias; however, there is no reason to expect that the effect, if any, would be more than minimal.

3.9.2.1 Key informant interviews. Overall, I expected that key informant interviews would highlight three aspects within each fieldwork area:

- the local council policy & planning provisions made for young adults in that area;
- the social patterns or trends influencing leisure options of young adults; and
- how the leisure pursuits of the target group were perceived by others in their community, particularly by those in positions of power and influence.

The key informants were in two categories: political (local politics) and social (community). For establishing information on local area policies and planning strategies for leisure and young adults, I interviewed the local member for each of the regional councils in the postcode of the field site. At the time of the study, the rural area of Gin Gin was located in Division 3 of the Bundaberg Shire, the outer-metropolitan area of Beenleigh area was located in Division 4 of the Logan Shire, and the inner-metropolitan
area of South Brisbane area was located in the Division of Woollongabba in the Brisbane City Council. Less political and more community or socially oriented information was obtained by interviewing local community members who worked in the community development sector.

I interviewed the local councillors specifically for their insight into the local area policy and planning environment. Additional key informants from the community sector provided social and community observations and viewpoints. In some instances, informants were able to provide additional social and historical information. They were:

- a community church leader (and the school chaplain at the local high school) whose family were long-time residents of the area;
- a casual schoolteacher who maintained contact with ex-students, and was well connected in the local community through a variety of special interest groups; and
- a community recreation provider who had been working to increase women’s participation in recreational activities for many years.

Together, the key informants provided insights into the local history, policy and planning influences relating to the leisure of young adults in their respective areas.

A summary of the types of key informants and the questions asked of them is in Table 3.6 (political key informants—members for local council) and Table 3.7 (social/community key informants) respectively. A copy of the general interview questions for both is in Appendix G.
Table 3.6

**Summary of Questions Asked of Political Key Informants (Members for Local Council)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political key informant</th>
<th>Question theme</th>
<th>Question content</th>
<th>Related factors in the study design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local member for council</td>
<td>Known leisure pursuits</td>
<td>What types of leisure or recreational pursuits do young adults participate in this area?</td>
<td>Social Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues &amp; requirements</td>
<td>What are the main issues or requirements for the participant in these activities</td>
<td>Social Economic Environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social patterns or trends</td>
<td>How have you seen the area change for young adults and what plans for the future are there that relate to this age group?</td>
<td>Social Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence of local policy &amp; planning</td>
<td>What focus is there on the recreational or leisure-related health &amp; wellbeing needs of the young adult age group?</td>
<td>Political Economic Environmental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7

**Summary of Questions Asked of Community Key Informants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community key informant</th>
<th>Question theme</th>
<th>Question content</th>
<th>Related factors in the study design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community worker</td>
<td>Types of leisure pursuits</td>
<td>What types of leisure or recreational pursuits do young adults participate in here?</td>
<td>Social Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Church Leaders</td>
<td>Requirements for participation in leisure pursuits</td>
<td>What do you understand to be the main issues or requirements for their participation in these activities?</td>
<td>Social Economic Environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>What barriers and motivators do you notice?</td>
<td>What services or programs from your organisation are well patronised by YA?</td>
<td>Social Environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes over time</td>
<td>What social patterns and trends in the needs or expectations for YA and leisure have you observed over time?</td>
<td>Historical Social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.9.3 **Focus groups.** The intention was that the inclusion of a focus group in each fieldwork area would provide a snapshot of key concepts from the collective viewpoint of a modest size group (about 12). The aim of each focus group was to explore the general understandings and experiences of leisure, as well as some of the considerations influencing their choices.

General information collected in this way would help to frame my understanding of the leisure practices and attitudes to leisure of the target group, as well as provide an overarching sense of what issues were important to them in each area. The questions covered four main themes in relation to young adults resident in the area:

- the types of leisure pursuits engaged in (including gendered participation);
- their general understandings of leisure;
- what they perceived the outcomes of leisure to be; and
- the considerations for leisure participation.

I anticipated that data generated in this way would provide another useful layer of information integral to the backdrop for the study overall. This data could the triangulated with other data sources and, informed by health literature and social theory, add to the rigour of my study.

In an effort to avoid potential gender bias in the focus groups, I originally planned to organise gender-specific focus groups. I theorised that this would provide interesting insights, not just into their own generalised view of leisure for young adults in their localised community, but also into their collective gendered view of leisure for their own gender and that of other gendered groups. However, all but one group were a mix of gender. That small focus group (of three) was single gendered (male), making the gendered perspective less visible than I had hoped.
The larger focus groups took approximately 60 min. each to conduct and the smaller ones half this time. I facilitated each group and provided healthy refreshments for participants. At the conclusion of each focus group, I invited them to participate in an individual interview.

As facilitator, I opened the discussion with the central topic—the leisure pursuits of young adults in their respective area. Throughout the process, notes were taken on a large sheet of paper placed in the centre of the group space, and were scribed either by myself or, in the case of the largest focus group, by a participant. The information from the discussion was organised on the page in categories based on the questions asked. I maintained accuracy of the written records through a system of validation with group members both during and at the completion of the process. Each session was audio recorded with the participants’ permission, and I used the recordings later for confirmation and cross-referencing.

As it was difficult to distinguish between individual speakers in the larger focus groups, I did not transcribe these audio recordings, but rather used the notes taken at the focus groups to contribute to the background discussion for each study site and for the target group more generally. I created summary tables from these notes and cross-referenced each set of notes with the corresponding audio recording. I used these summary tables to develop themes that linked with those developed from other data, for example, participant interview data and photographs from the environmental audit.

The questions for the focus group complemented the individual participant interviews by opening up the general idea of leisure for that age group. To test the line of inquiry, I piloted the interview and focus group questions with a small number of young adults in Canberra and incorporated their feedback in the final list. A copy of the focus group questions is in Appendix H.
In total, four focus groups were conducted: two in the rural area (with three and seven participants respectively) and two in the outer-metropolitan area (with three and 11 participants respectively). My efforts to arrange a focus group in the inner-metropolitan area were unsuccessful.

3.9.4 Environmental audit. The environmental audit involved a process of locating and listing the leisure and leisure-related facilities, services and spaces available in each study site as well as documenting the general living conditions and the ‘feel’ of each area. Indeed, I sought to immerse myself in the neighbourhood in which my participants were living, as I was attempting to collect (as unobtrusively as possible) as much evidence as possible of the local setting that may be influencing their LTPA practices.

I took digital still photographs of neighbourhood characteristics and catalogued them as a visual record in which in part was to situate interview participants and their perspectives, and to be able to compare physical environments between fieldwork areas. I analysed these photographs manually and used selected photos in my thesis to demonstrate aesthetic elements referred to in interviews as well as to provide enduring visual images for me as researcher of the built and natural environment as they were at the time of the study.

Overall, the main benefit of the audit was to develop an ethnographic profile for each site and to store contextual information (in the form of artefacts) for later analysis of the cultural and environmental factors shaping leisure there. Examples of artefacts collected in each site included community newspapers, photographs, leisure-related brochures, street maps and census data. The audit process also enabled the discovery of other factors influential in the local setting of participants in each area.
To collect data relating to neighbourhood characteristics for each area, I used a combination of street directories, council maps and web-based maps to plan visits, and then travelled around each field site, either by foot or by car, documenting as many relevant characteristics as was practical. The audit included natural spaces such as parks, reserves, rivers and lakes, and built spaces such as shops, gymnasiums, swimming pools, bicycle and shared paths, cinemas, theatres, libraries, galleries, shops and cafés. I also noted built structures within natural spaces as well as natural spaces incorporated within built structures. Where possible, I gathered data on the types of neighbourhood characteristics known to influence physical activity in public spaces: the quantity and quality of street lighting, footpaths, shared paths, cycle paths, cycle lanes on roads, exercise stations, playgrounds, picnic shelters, rubbish bins and drinking fountains, and public seating (in parks and at public transport hubs).

The audit did not include enumerating private dwellings, but noted where homes existed in relation to other environmental features as well as, generically, the types and densities of these dwellings. In order to locate and describe individual aspects of the environment, I used a combination of methods: systematic walking or driving through each area listing, describing and photographing neighbourhood characteristics. To ensure accurate auditing of the study sites, I used current street directory maps and topographical maps to help plan and execute the audit process.

The criteria used for the audit reflected the broad definitions of leisure from the literature to include both inactive and active forms of leisure as well as the public spaces where leisure occurs—social spaces, natural environments and built environments. The audit incorporated aspects of quality and quantity in relation to leisure-related spaces, facilities and services I discovered by immersing myself in the study sites, taking notes and photographs, and searching local council and community websites and shopfronts.
Time and Transitions

for information about the areas. Although the site of many leisure activities, I did not
document the domestic home of participants. Rather, I asked participants about the
general characteristics of the family home environment during their interviews.

In particular, the audit addressed the presence and to some extent the quality of
opportunities for active leisure (e.g., team sports, cycling, walking and swimming) and
the presence and quality of opportunities for sedentary leisure (e.g., entertainment
venues, retail outlets and food outlets). Sometimes these categories of active and
sedentary leisure sites would overlap, such as a swimming complex with a café, open
parkland with barbeque facilities, or mixed-use space that facilitated opportunities for
physical activity for all age groups. In these cases, it was problematic to categorise some
leisure spaces as being of one type or another; therefore, such sites were categorised as
both. Other examples of items sought in the audit included cycle and walking paths,
cycle lanes, open parkland, secure (fenced) parks, fitness centres, sporting venues,
entertainment centres, cultural sites and centres, food outlets (e.g., restaurants, cafés and
fast-food eateries), retail outlets, public and private spaces for leisure (e.g., facilities and
services present or available in the area), and community centres. With respect to
describing the quality of sites for leisure, I took digital still photographs and supported
these with written and audio-recorded notes.

Throughout the audit, I documented my direct observations of the physical and
policy spaces in each of the study sites (built, natural and political environment). By
taking photographs of the physical environments, I aimed not only to have images to
refer to and help describe the locations (mental triggers), but also to have images that
would help to describe aesthetically the environmental elements described by
participants in their interviews (e.g., the cleanliness of local parklands or the graffiti in
their local recreational areas). By interviewing a local councillor for each of the study
sites and collecting relevant information from local council websites, I included the policy environment in which participants were living. These aspects contributed to a picture of the environments that participants described in their interviews.

As a part of the environmental audit, I also collected as much information as possible about the sociocultural and physical environment in each study site. I collected a variety of publically accessible print and web-based materials to contribute to the environmental audit. Examples of these materials were: community service directories, local council pamphlets highlighting particular leisure-related features of the environment, for example, shared paths (for walking and cycling), local history materials, site maps for publically accessible recreation/leisure spaces, street directory maps and aerial photographs of the study locations, local newspapers, statistical data from various sources, such as the ABS and other organisations, for demographic information about each study site.

The aim of collecting sociocultural and physical environmental data was to enhance my understanding of the attributes of each site. These data would also be reference points for me if they came up in the interviews and would help me to understand participants’ perspectives with greater clarity. This was in keeping with the concept that the everyday things that influence their individual leisure practice (and physical activity practices within this practice) had a role to play in the construction of their lives (Webb et al., 2002). By immersing myself in their neighbourhood, I aimed to understand the milieu of each participant better and relate reflections in their interviews with characteristics from their immediate environment. In this way, data from the environmental audits would provide touchstones for the research process that would enable another level of understanding of the meaning behind the behaviours and descriptions provided by participants. In many ways, this bears some of the hallmarks of
an ethnographic approach that enables the researcher to understand tangibly or more directly, the experiences and meaning making engaged in by the research participants.

3.10 Limitations

Given the nature of the research questions and the scope of the project, the collection of data was limited to a rural area, an outer-metropolitan area and an inner-metropolitan area. I chose the general area of South East Queensland for its temperate climate, the population size of the capital city of Brisbane and the wide variety of opportunities for both physically active and inactive leisure. In order to be able to investigate any effects of distance from a capital city on the LTPA of participants, the study sites were limited to three location types from the South East Queensland area.

For the purposes of this study, research participants needed to be aged 18–30 years, preferably without dependent children, in sedentary employment or study and living in these areas. In the few instances in which prospective recruits were slightly older than 30 years (3 participants) or had very small children (6 participants, 4 of whom were couples), allowances were made on the grounds that they restricted their responses to reflect their lives before they were 30 years old and before the birth of their child. Although I did not measure the levels of physical activity of research participants during the research project, I did ascertain the types, frequency, costs and aspirations for participants’ leisure time physical activity. Indeed, as the focus of the research was more about attitudes and influences to participation in LTPA, any use of measuring devices such as accelerometers would have given participants an incorrect perception of the intent of my research. Whilst the collection of such data may have been useful, my decision not to measure PA with accelerometers focused attention on the perceptions of individuals being physically active in spare time. From my reading of the literature, this
would be more helpful in addressing the gap in knowledge about why physical inactivity rates continue to be on the rise.

Infrastructure, planning and policy data were limited to interviews at the local council level and I therefore saw these through the lens of the member for local council in each area. The members for local council who I interviewed acknowledged that they were speaking in their official capacity and for the record. Although I only sought the political perspective from them, I acknowledge that the lack of freedom to speak openly about local planning and policy for the leisure of their constituents is also a limitation.

The complexity of the task (mainly determined by the physical size and complexity of each site) relative to the amount of time I had to conduct each audit also put limitations on the amount and type of environmental data collected. During the fieldwork, it became evident that the expectation that I would be able to record detailed environmental features as well as recruit for and conduct interviews was unrealistic. Although I completed a detailed environmental audit of the rural area of Gin Gin, an equivalent level of auditing became increasingly difficult to maintain as the sites of fieldwork became larger and more complex. Specifically, the environmental data collected were limited to spaces contributing to or designed for leisure (including recreation, socialising, food and activity, and related goods, opportunities, facilities and services), LTPA (including exercise, sport, active transport, organised and spontaneous/social sport), upbringing (including childhood and adolescence, experiences at school and transitions through life), and personal circumstances.

3.11 Summary

This chapter has explained the overarching interpretive approach taken in this research project. The specific recruitment methods and analytical techniques used in my research project helped me to create a picture of the social, cultural and physical spaces
in which the research participants lived. By triangulating the several kinds of data collected from three different types of locations, I expected to shed light on the common enablers and inhibitors to LTPA, as well as others as they arose.
Chapter 4: The Participants: Who They Are and Where They Live

This chapter summarises the socio-demographics of the young adult participants and the official statistical data collected for each study site. Where relevant, I have included the perceptions of key informants from their interviews. Together, they provide a lens through which I later analyse the relationships between the participants’ environment, situation and experiences with LTPA. This helps understand many of the contextual factors influencing the decisions related to physical activity made by participants and explored in subsequent chapters.

Who are the individuals in this study and where do they live?

4.1 General Profile of Participants in Each Study Site

Table 4.1 shows an overview of the young adult interview participant demographic and economic data from their responses to the closed questions provided at the interview process. Overall, participants from each field site were of a similar age range and gender ratio but differed in terms of employment status, levels of education and income levels. The average age of participants in this study was 23 years; nearly two thirds (62%) were aged between 18 and 24 years. Most of those from the rural and outer-metropolitan areas grew up in the areas similar to where they were living at the time of interview. Many inner-metropolitan area participants were studying full-time and working low-paid jobs (either casual or part-time), whereas their rural counterparts were often not studying but working close to full-time hours in low-paid occupations that they often described as casual employment.

Levels of school and post-school education were higher in metropolitan areas than in rural areas, as was level of income. Due to its proximity to major tertiary
institutions and infrastructure, the inner-metropolitan area of South Brisbane attracted more participants who were tertiary students engaged in full-time study and part-time or casual employment than the other two sites. There was greater cultural diversity among participants from the inner-metropolitan area compared with the other two, mostly due to a higher proportion of participants who were born overseas and spoke other languages as well as English.

Table 4.1

Summary of Socio-Demographic and Socio-Economic Background of Participants by Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range (years)</th>
<th>Rural (n = 20)</th>
<th>Outer-metro (n = 21)</th>
<th>Inner-metro (n = 20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median age (years)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age (years)</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males; Females</td>
<td>11:9</td>
<td>12:9</td>
<td>11:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of school education</td>
<td>Year 10 (n = 4)</td>
<td>Year 10 (n = 1)</td>
<td>Year 10 (n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 11 (n = 2)</td>
<td>Year 11 (n = 0)</td>
<td>Year 11 (n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 12 (n = 14)</td>
<td>Year 12 (n = 20)</td>
<td>Year 12 (n = 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest qualification</td>
<td>Trade or other qual (n = 9)</td>
<td>Trade or other qual (n = 13)</td>
<td>Trade or other qual (n = 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in tertiary education (TAFE or university)</td>
<td>n = 5 (TAFE n = 0; University n = 5)</td>
<td>n = 5 (TAFE n = 2; University n = 3)</td>
<td>n = 12 (TAFE n = 4; University n )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>Unemployed (n = 6)</td>
<td>Unemployed (n = 4)</td>
<td>Unemployed (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual (n = 5)</td>
<td>Casual (n = 2)</td>
<td>Casual (n = 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pt (n = 2)</td>
<td>Pt (n = 1)</td>
<td>Pt (n = 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ft (n = 7)</td>
<td>Ft (n = 14)</td>
<td>Ft (n = 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income range per week</td>
<td>Nil income: $399 (n = 10)</td>
<td>Nil income: $399 (n = 6)</td>
<td>Nil income: $399 (n = 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$400–799 (n = 10)</td>
<td>$400–799 (n = 9)</td>
<td>$400–799 (n = 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$800–1,599 (n = 0); $800–1,599 (n = 6); $800–1,599 (n = 6);</td>
<td>$800–1,599 (n = 6); $800–1,599 (n = 6);</td>
<td>$800–1,599 (n = 6); $800–1,599 (n = 6);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: $400–599</td>
<td>Average: $600–799</td>
<td>Average: $600–799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born outside of Australia</td>
<td>n = 0</td>
<td>n = 4</td>
<td>n = 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak language/s other than English</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
<td>n = 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.1 Cultural diversity. Although most participants in this study were Australian born and raised, more of those living in the inner-metropolitan area came from culturally diverse backgrounds than their rural and outer-metropolitan counterparts. Interviewees born and raised overseas used this cultural lens during their interviews to explain their current experiences with leisure and physical activity. When comparing situations from their home country or town, they displayed a heightened awareness of the differences between their physical and social environments and the country of origin. Throughout their interviews, they made thoughtful links with these aspects of their lives that influenced their physical activity, which are touched on in the literature but not often described more fully.

The inner-metropolitan interviewees recalled a variety of life experiences ranging from high-density living in the busy capital cities of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Colombia, to life in the outskirts of Dublin or a small village in rural Italy; and from low-density living on a suburban block in the wealthy suburb of Spring Hill in South Brisbane to a 60-acre hobby farm in South Eastern Queensland. Nearly half of the inner-metropolitan interviewees had only moved to the area recently. Of this subgroup, most were born and raised overseas; or interstate—from Western Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Of the remainder, four came from inner-metropolitan Brisbane and seven in other parts of Queensland. Half of the inner-metropolitan participants were born overseas and over one third spoke a language other than English at home (Chinese, Irish, Italian or Spanish). Many of these born overseas were on study and/or temporary work visas. By contrast, most participants from the rural and outer-metropolitan areas were born either in or near to where they currently lived and spoke only English at home.
4.1.2 Living and working. For the time between leaving compulsory schooling and starting a family of their own, research participants described a common practice of living with others of a similar age and circumstance, or with immediate or extended family members. For those participants who were in their first white collar job, were tertiary students or were on a working holiday visa, the close proximity of the inner metropolitan suburbs to many high quality amenities made it an ideal place to live. South Brisbane is very close to three major tertiary education institutions (two universities and one technical and further education [TAFE] institution), extensive opportunities for employment in the capital city centre, cultural centres and public transport. Most participants from this area lived in group-houses or with a partner or friend. By contrast, those living in the rural area of Gin Gin mostly lived with immediate or extended family or their partner or partner’s family. Most participants from outer-metropolitan Beenleigh resided with immediate or extended family, with a partner or friend, and rarely lived alone or in a share-house situation.

4.1.2.1 Income and education. Almost all (54) of the 61 participants had completed senior secondary school (Year 12) and four of the remaining seven had completed a trade certificate or similar. Overall, most participants were in some type of paid employment, with one third studying for a tertiary qualification at either a university or TAFE (twice as many were studying full-time as those studying part-time). That a significant minority (approximately 20% [12/61]) are not in paid employment highlights the importance of more research into the implications for the health of this age group.

Although the three locales shared similar percentages of young adults undertaking tertiary studies, more inner-metropolitan participants were studying at a university than in the other areas, where more were studying at TAFE. Many earned
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less than $400 per week and effectively lived below the poverty line (Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2009). Figure 4.1 shows that a larger proportion of inner-metropolitan respondents earn higher incomes than their outer-metropolitan counterparts and particularly more than those from the rural area. These higher earning participants were working full-time in good jobs for their age as well as studying part-time at a nearby university to advance their career prospects.

![Figure 4.1. Proportion of participants by income bracket and region. Income ranges as per ABS guide: total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income usually received.](image)

Figure 4.2 represents the different employment status of participants, where the rural area has the highest percentage of unemployed participants. Participants in the inner-metropolitan area reported the highest percentage of part-time or casual employment and the lowest percentage of full-time employment. The employment opportunities reflect the sectors for industry in each area—city centre life, universities

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2 The poverty line was $395 inclusive of housing as established for the September quarter of 2008 when these data were collected (Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2009, p. 3.)
and cultural centres for South Brisbane; manufacturing industry for Beenleigh; and
agricultural industry for Gin Gin.

The differences between education and income levels across the study sites
invited commentary on the capacity of each area to provide equitable access to health-
promoting LTPA opportunities, particularly for young adults on low incomes.

Figure 4.2. Proportion of participants by employment status and region.

Living healthily while studying full-time and on a low budget can be a
challenge, particularly in a capital city, where rental prices tend to be high and absorb a
large percentage of income (see Appendix A: Table A.3 for median rent and housing
loan rates for each area). The costs of housing, transport, food and general utilities are
added to the costs associated with study—tuition fees, books, equipment and other
resources. One advantage of being in a region that includes a capital city is the
availability of part-time and casual employment.

To help better understand the circumstances in which participants were living,
Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the employment status of those studying, or not, respectively.
Figure 4.4 highlights the high rate of part-time or casual employment for participants
not studying in the Beenleigh area. Figure 4.3 show that all of the inner-metropolitan
participants who were studying full-time also found time to earn an income, albeit meagre.

4.1.2.2 Employment. The combination of study, employment and income information highlights the area differences across the three sites. Just over half of the outer-metropolitan participants who were not studying were in full-time employment. This was more than in the other two areas, where less than 30% of those not studying were in full-time employment (see Figure 4.4). Figure 4.3 shows the levels of employment for those who were studying full-time and highlights both the larger number of young adults studying in the inner-metropolitan area and that they had paid jobs (in contrast to those studying from the other areas and who were not employed).

The study and employment loads combined suggest that young adults who are both studying and working many hours may lack the time to include regular physical activity in their schedule.

![Figure 4.3. Employment status of participants who were studying full-time, by region.](chart)
Figure 4.4. Employment status of participants who were not studying, by region.

4.2 The Study Sites

As this chapter uses socio-demographic data drawn from the ABS, the area type attributed to them by the ABS refers to the sites and regions of research. The statistical local area (SLA) is the smallest unit used by the Australian Standard Geographical Classification and is based on the local government boundaries and councils that administer them (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). I use them in this thesis to describe various aspects of the study sites, including disadvantage and socio-demographic descriptors. The boundaries of each SLA are the same as the boundaries of the local council responsible for the specific geographic area and hence of the funds and local policies that affect the day-to-day operations of the study sites. That is, SLAs reflect the policy environment of the research areas used in this study.

4.2.1 Area disadvantage. Analysis of indicators for socio-demographic and economic advantage positions the rural area of Gin Gin as the most disadvantaged of the three areas researched, and the inner-city area of South Brisbane as the most advantaged. (Appendix A: Table A.1 provide further comparisons of the study areas
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with regard to population size, economic disadvantage, education, income and accommodation trends). Table 4.2 provides a summary of the area disadvantage for six socio-demographic indicators (education, employment, income, age, volunteering and home internet connection) and I have ranked them as most, median or least disadvantaged relative to each other (see Appendix A: Tables A.1–A.4 for the data supporting these rankings).
Table 4.2

Ranking of Area Disadvantage for Key Indicators by Study Site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>SLA of Kolan (Rural)</th>
<th>SLA of Logan (OM)</th>
<th>SLA of Brisbane (IM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Most disadvantage</td>
<td>Median disadvantage</td>
<td>Least disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>Most disadvantage</td>
<td>Median disadvantage</td>
<td>Least disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>Median disadvantage</td>
<td>Least disadvantage</td>
<td>Most disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Median disadvantage</td>
<td>Most disadvantage</td>
<td>Least disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Most disadvantage</td>
<td>Median disadvantage</td>
<td>Least disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>Least disadvantage</td>
<td>Most disadvantage</td>
<td>Median disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home internet connection</td>
<td>Most disadvantage</td>
<td>Median disadvantage</td>
<td>Least disadvantage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Information for this table sourced from the Queensland Regional Profiles; Kolan, the Queensland Regional Profiles: Beenleigh; and the Queensland Regional Profiles: South Brisbane, by the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2011, Brisbane: Queensland Treasury.

These indicators of socio-demographic and economic disadvantage show that:

- the rural area is the most disadvantaged of the three study sites, followed by the outer-metropolitan area, then the inner-metropolitan area;
- mobility into the inner-metropolitan SLA is higher than the other areas, particularly compared with the rural SLA; and
- nearly one third of residents in the SLA of Brisbane were born overseas (including people on working visas and international students and staff attending any of the higher education institutions or international colleges in the area).

With the exception of volunteering, the rural area is also the most disadvantaged for access to different types of employment and school-based education (see Appendix A: Table A.2 for a detailed comparison). The inner-metropolitan study site is the most advantaged on most of these indicators, signalling greater choice and opportunities for those living there.
The SLA of Kolan is the most disadvantaged area of the three SLAs for education and income and has the oldest median age, indicating an ageing population. However, both the rural and outer-metropolitan SLAs provide more affordable housing (relative to the median weekly income) than the inner-metropolitan SLA, which has the highest percentage of median household income per week spent on rent (see Appendix A: Table A.3 for more detail).

Residents of the SLA of Brisbane have much higher levels of tertiary education than those in the other two SLAs and similar levels of certificate-level qualifications. They also enjoy the highest median individual and family income of the three areas. The SLA of Brisbane also has more full-time and part-time employment as well as those employed but away from work (e.g., on leave provisions). However, the same area has an unemployment level twice that of either of the other two areas.

Overall, residents of Gin Gin are living with greater economic disadvantage than those from the other two study areas. Specifically, the SLA of Kolan rates the lowest of the three areas for full-time employment, financial disadvantage and for home internet connection. This rural area also rates low for individuals studying at university.

4.2.2 Changing demography: When the tree changers came to town. Two of the key informants offered a contributor to the economic disadvantage experienced in Gin Gin as they reflected on key demographic changes that have occurred there over the past 20 years. Unprompted during their respective interviews, they shared their observations and opinions of the effects of a new phenomenon that began about 20 years ago when people they referred to as ‘tree changers’ (those moving from cities to inland rural areas in search of a better lifestyle) settled in the area. They described the strain placed on employment and existing support services for the small population in
the 1990s when an influx of individuals and families on low incomes and with minimal education occurred in the area.

According to Councillor Wayne Honor, a misleading marketing campaign selling drought-affected acreage at very low prices attracted mostly unskilled low-SES ‘troubled tree changers’ and ‘troubled families’ (RKI03) to the area. His recollection is similar to that of local church leader Michael, who explained the false marketing of the shire as a very cheap ‘lush, safe haven and lifestyle change’ (RKI01) in capital cities interstate. Drought-ridden 25-acre blocks out of town were reportedly sold for relatively small amounts of money and were, according to Michael, an ‘attractive option for low-SES families running away from problems in the city’ (RKI01). In Cr Honor’s opinion, these families did not have sufficient money after moving to Gin Gin to make the necessary improvements to their land (typically, a dry block of land without shelter, water, sewerage or electricity) and were trapped in a cycle of poverty and social isolation. Cr Honor contrasted them with the ‘sea changers’ from the late 1990s and early 2000s who moved to the Sunshine Coast (approximately 300 km from Gin Gin) and who were largely self-funded semi-retirees, with skills and qualifications. From his position as councillor, he saw the latter group as having a more positive influence in the seaside communities. His comparison with the tree changers in Gin Gin is pointed. In his opinion, they brought their economic and social problems with them in the form of unemployment, low incomes, poor health and drug usage (particularly marijuana), which then had a draining effect on their community, both socially and economically.

A third key informant from Gin Gin perceived the situation differently. A self-described but more recent ‘tree-changer’, she and her husband bought a property outside the township about five years previously to escape the commercialisation of city life. As a relative newcomer to Gin Gin, Bernadette (RKI02) appreciated the social support
afforded by a small community. Much like Cr Honor’s description of the ‘sea changers’ to the Sunshine Coast, she and her husband were well educated, skilled and financially independent. They were equipped to operate more constructively in the local community than the ‘tree changers’ of 20 years before apparently were. Bernadette contributed a great deal to the local community through her voluntary and paid work, and compared with the large coastal city she left, she found the Gin Gin community ‘stable and relaxed . . . it’s like turning back the social clock 20 years. People are really stable here, families share responsibilities with young and living arrangements’. As a relative newcomer, she did not see the problems Cr Honor and Michael described.

While exploring the social history of Gin Gin is outside of the scope of this research, the contrasting perspectives shown here may reflect the difference between viewing a social context at face value and understanding it through lived experience.

Interviews with key informants revealed a variety of effects of area disadvantage for young adults. Both Cr Wayne Honor (RKI03) and church leader Michael (RKI01) discussed the downward spiral of disadvantage associated with being in a very disadvantaged rural area. They observed an increase in social issues linked to poverty and marijuana use among young people that they believed were results of low levels of education and employment. Michael and Bernadette both noted that their applications for community development grants leveraged largely on their postcode being one of the poorest in the state, which in turn, went into the community to improve services for health and wellbeing.

3 At the time of this study, the shire was due to merge with a neighbouring shire that included the city of Bundaberg. They were worried that when this happened, their postcode status would change and affect their ability to secure much-needed funds for projects.
4.2.3 Sectors for employment and industry. The study sites differ dramatically in the opportunities for employment linked to main industry sectors. Some interviewees mentioned that these opportunities for employment relate to the education levels, qualifications and income levels for many residents.

The main industries in the rural SLA are in agriculture, forestry and fishing, whereas the outer-metropolitan SLA of Logan supports employment largely in manufacturing, and the SLA of Brisbane features jobs in the professional and technical services sectors. These opportunities are necessarily linked to industry and infrastructure, and a comparison of industry and development indicators for the study sites shows the rural SLA to be the most disadvantaged for business ownership and for internet connection at home (see Appendix A: Table A.5).

4.3 Rural Area Profile

The rural area selected for this study was Gin Gin (see map in Figure 4.5). It is located on the Bruce Highway 51 km west of Bundaberg and 380 km north of Brisbane and is a main thoroughfare for travellers and road transport vehicles. Although considered a central service area for the immediate local region, Gin Gin has no public transport network in the immediate area and had minimal recreation venues at the time of fieldwork.

The Gin Gin Chamber of Commerce (as shown on their website http://www.ginginqld.org.au/) knows Gin Gin as the ‘Gateway to the Bush, Barra and the Bundaberg Region’. This catchphrase markets the area as a link between a rural lifestyle and the fringe benefits of close proximity to a regional hub, and promotes its reputation for recreational fishing and boating (especially barramundi fishing in the regional reservoir). The township is a ‘tidy town’ award winner and boasts an active historical society. First settled by Europeans in 1847, it is in Division 3 of the
Bundaberg Regional Council. In the 2006 ABS Census of Population and Housing, it recorded an immediate population of 943, and approximately 5,000 in the region. The median age for the area in 2006 was 45 years, the median income was $669 per week ($15,964 per annum) and the average household size was 2.2 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010).


**4.3.1 Outer-metropolitan area profile.** The outer-metropolitan area of Beenleigh is located 34 km south of Brisbane City and is in the geographical centre of the growth belt between Brisbane and the Gold Coast (see map in Figure 4.6). Established in the 1860s, Beenleigh is the oldest suburb of the 11 making up the area. These suburbs are within the jurisdiction of Divisions 4 and 12 of the Logan Shire Council and include the suburbs or localities of Edens Landing, Loganholme, Eagleby, Holmview, Staplton, Bahrs Scrub, Mount Warren Park and Yatala. Compared with the inner-metropolitan areas, the Beenleigh area offers a modest public transport network
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(rail only north to Brisbane and south to the Gold Coast, and buses within the Beenleigh and surrounding suburbs) and access to a moderate range of active and inactive leisure options at the time of fieldwork.

According to the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, the population of Beenleigh was 7,816. The median individual income was $402 per week ($20,904 per annum), the median age of persons living in Beenleigh was 34 years and the average household size was 2.5 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010).


4.3.2 Inner-metropolitan area profile. The inner-metropolitan area of South Brisbane is a well-established area and known cultural precinct located in the local council area of the Gabba Ward, Brisbane City Council (see map in Figure 4.7). It includes five suburbs (South Brisbane, Highgate Hill, West End, Hill End and Dutton Park) bounded by a loop of the Brisbane River and a major motorway. It is approximately 1 km from the heart of Brisbane City, and at the time of fieldwork,
afforded easy access to extensive public transport networks and a wide range of both physically active and inactive leisure options. An array of river ferries, public buses, trains, a car and dedicated pedestrian bridge and a pedestrian and cycle specific bridge connect South Brisbane to the city centre.

According to the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, the population of South Brisbane was 22,000. The median individual income was $509 per week ($26,468 per annum), the median age of persons living there was 40 years and the average household size in South Brisbane was 2.5 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

Figure 4.7. Map of South Brisbane fieldwork area. Adapted from 2006 Census Community Profile: South Brisbane by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2007f)

Retrieved from
4.4 Environmental Aspects

Given the semi-tropical climate of South East Queensland, it is reasonable to expect that much of the physical activity of residents would occur out-of-doors and that environmental aspects such as annual rainfall, temperature range and general terrain would influence participation. The research sites are on about the same latitude and therefore share a similar climate; the annual rainfall is similar (946–1,132 mm) and the average daily temperatures range between 14.6 °C and 26.6 °C. The Brisbane River flanks South Brisbane on three sides and many of its streets are quite hilly. By contrast, the terrain of Beenleigh is relatively flat with some undulating areas, as is the case for Gin Gin. Both South Brisbane and Beenleigh have rivers, but these are more conducive to boating activities than walking alongside or swimming activities mainly because of the existing boat traffic. Gin Gin has a small creek and a separate agricultural canal. Dedicated parkland and shared paths make riverside walking, running and cycling possible only in South Brisbane. Bush and private land flank the river and creek on the outskirts of the other two areas, thus restricting public access.

However, the three areas vary in terms of population size and density, which has flow-on effects with regard to aspects such as infrastructure, facilities and services (discussed in ensuing chapters). Subsequently, the SLA of Kolan is the least densely populated and the SLA of Brisbane is the most densely populated (see Appendix A: Table A.1).

4.5 Summary

Although the three study sites share a number of characteristics, they differ in the population age distribution, employment status and income, cultural background, types of tertiary study and living arrangements. The next two chapters explore how these environments contribute to attitudes and experiences of leisure and physical
activity by investigating the participants’ individual experiences and understandings in the context of their immediate social, cultural and environmental context.
Chapter 5: Cultural and Economic Factors Associated with the Leisure Time Physical Activity of Young Adults

Findings that relate to the ways that leisure is understood and practised by participants is presented in this chapter and the next. These findings come from in-depth interviews, closed questions and focus groups with young adults, as well as from data from environmental surveys and interviews with key actors. They incorporate individual perspectives and histories, neighbourhood characteristics, local policy and some of the individual stories behind the socio-demographic data. Altogether, the findings bring a human experience to the work and help to illustrate core understandings of leisure and physical activity that guide the leisure practices of those involved in the study.

With the overall research framework in mind, the focus of this chapter is on exploring two specific issues relating to the initial research questions:

- how individuals value and prioritise leisure and physical activity and thus invest their money and time in it; and
- how participants enact their understandings of physical activity in their free time.

The binding thread throughout the participant interviews is the importance of being social, connecting with others for support, encouragement and companionship. Whilst the need to recover from the rigours of work or study was frequently cited as a motivating factor for sedentary leisure, the desire to be with like-minded people shapes the reasons most participants gave for how they spend their leisure time. When participants discussed this connection with others, they discuss combinations with
eating and drinking and sometimes with physical activities such as social team sport or time at the gymnasium in a fitness class or the weights room.

I begin with the perspective of the research participants, drawing attention to how young adults understand leisure, leisure time and physical activity within the context of their leisure time and more generally. Here, the voices of young women and men explain what it means for them to have and use time for recreation as individuals and how they perceive this for their peers. When they recall experiences from their childhood and adolescence, it sheds light on the role of these experiences in shaping their lives today.

The second section explores the relevance of levels of income reported by participants, their preferred priorities for spending their money, and the availability and accessibility of commodities (goods and services) for leisure. Through their accounts of spending on leisure, I examine their consumption practices and the affective domain of purchasing for leisure. Finally, I investigate the way the specific environment of each study site contributes to the consumption practices of the respondents who live there.

5.1 Cultural Factors: Young Adults’ Views of Leisure Time Physical Activity

Two key cultural aspects of LTPA participation stand out. First, young adults place strong emphasis on suitable social groups (especially family and friendship networks) in conjunction with safe and pleasant physical spaces in which to be active. This includes involvement in regular family-based LTPA from an early age, outdoor and free-range childhood play, organised physical activity as an adolescent, and active transport generally. The second key aspect is the growing awareness of the independent young adult of the need for physical activity to maintain their mental and physical health. Figure 5.1 summarises the cultural factors influencing the LTPA practices of the
research participants; Appendix B: Figures B.2 and B.3 shows an expanded version of the diagram showing more detail.

**Figure 5.1.** Factors influencing the LTPA practices of young adults in this study.

By combining elements from the interview and focus group data with information from the environmental surveys, this section shows how such elements operate to facilitate or inhibit physical activity. Here, I offer prominent examples from three groups of siblings, and (where available) their partners (11 young adults), who show the combined influences of upbringing and environment on their current LTPA. They illustrate how individuals embody values and physical activity practices and how these relate to their leisure time, enabling or inhibiting their physical activity.

**5.1.1 Defining leisure: Chilling out as a sanity saver.** This section specifically examines responses to the following questions:

- What do you think leisure is?
• Where do you think you have developed this idea of leisure from?\textsuperscript{4}

Participants from all three areas described leisure in terms of its function: to aid their relaxation and restoration; and they referred to the role that choice plays in leisure time. These young adults perceived leisure time as primarily important for maintaining their mental health and only sometimes for their physical health. It is also apparent that the combined influences of family and upbringing, relationships with friends, and neighbourhood characteristics were important in developing and sustaining their physical activity practices. Which activities they chose for their spare time largely arose from how they understood the meaning and purpose of leisure, and as a result, how they valued and prioritised it.

Food and food-related practices feature centrally in concert with socialising with friends and family, with most respondents nominating the combination of socialising and eating or drinking as one of their main preferences for leisure. The conceptual model in Figure 5.2 reflects the importance of this and maps themes related to the individual-level factors from the interviews. The top and bottom blocks of the diagram group the distal and proximal factors evident in this study related to the personal health practices of participants. The focal point for this thesis is the everyday health practice of individuals, represented where the circles overlap. Informing these practices are the daily and weekly regimes and habits connected to dietary practices, types and levels of physical activity and general perceptions of the construct of leisure held by the individual and of those immediately around them (partner, friends, family, housemates and colleagues).

\textsuperscript{4} The potential for recall bias is acknowledged here.
Underpinning individual understandings and practices is the general upbringing individuals remembered from growing up, and the physical surroundings that they recalled helped to shape many of their current attitudes to what they did for recreation and to being physically active. The bottom block of Figure 5.2 reflects the broader array of general attributes (values, sense of agency and personal capabilities) held by individuals in their daily lives. Participants referred to these attributes when describing things that influenced whether they were physically active or not.

Figure 5.2. Contributors to the understanding and attitudes to leisure and LTPA from the perspective of interviewees.
5.1.1.1 Defining leisure. Most of the young adults interviewed had clear ideas about:

- the purpose of leisure
- the type of time it involves, and
- the types of activities that align with these ideas.

They defined leisure time as a type of unstructured time that is typically about enjoyment, relaxation and choice. Of the utmost importance to interviewees was the freedom to choose what, when and how they spend their free/available time, particularly for the younger participants, aged 18–24 years. Participants described further divisions of unstructured time that helped guide their choices: serendipitous or unstructured leisure time and structured leisure time set aside for health maintenance, especially exercise for mental and physical wellbeing. (I discuss the time component of leisure in more detail later in this chapter.) However, some interviewees admitted they did not really think about what leisure actually is or how they developed their leisure practices. This lack of consciousness about leisure may reflect the engrained position of leisure as a ‘taken-for-granted’ concept in modern society, at least among young people.

5.1.1.2 Changing understandings of leisure. Although some respondents had not really thought much about leisure as a concept before the interview, others had and acknowledged that their understanding of leisure was changing. Those in their mid to late 20s discussed this in a more reflective and introspective manner than the younger participants, and were able to discuss the shifts in their appreciation of leisure since leaving school. They noted that when they were younger, leisure had been about fun but now it was more about relaxation and the accompanying mental and physical health benefits. This is exemplified by Simon (RPI07), in his mid-20s at the time of the interview, whose online computer game playing gradually shifted from being purely
about entertainment in his late teens, to providing the much-needed relaxation that helped him deal with the stresses of his job in the community services sector.

Although interviewees acknowledged that they had not thought much about their own understandings of leisure, once the conversation opened up during their interviews, they related many of their recollections of growing up to their current lifestyle, attitudes and understandings. The emphasis they placed on relaxation, rather than being physically active, at this stage of life closely related to the importance of family and friends in supporting them through their early years of adulthood.
5.1.1.3 The role of relaxation. Like Simon, many respondents talked about relaxation and maintaining their own sanity (mental health maintenance) as the prime reasons for what they did in their leisure time. Their leisure pursuits tended to be sedentary and social, which then become central themes in their discussion of LTPA. Interviewees talked about wanting to escape stressors, energise mentally and physically, rejuvenate, regenerate, switch off, release, unwind, zone out, reboot, and renew oneself. Being free of worries was also characteristic of their definitions and purpose of leisure. It was about time for oneself—to enhance their life, take personal time to relax, and escape the stressors of work and everyday existence. By aiming for this, participants felt that they would increase their energy levels (recharge their batteries), keep happy and save their sanity. With reference to the importance of relaxing social contact as a sanity saver, Axel’s explanation epitomises this common sentiment: ‘just waste time and get energy for myself . . . to [be able to] continue with work and life’ (Axel, IMPI17). From the perspectives of the research participants, I have created a set of common descriptors for the purpose of leisure that I have dubbed the nine Rs of leisure: the need to relax, reboot, regenerate, rejuvenate, renew, recentre, re-energise, release and relief.

Like a common definition of leisure, the young adults in this study viewed leisure as something that aided in their recovery from the rigours of duty (generally work or study). Some described the tension they felt between knowing that exercise is good for them and their preference for sedentary ways of using spare time to relax, and periodically they felt guilty about this. Annie (OMPI11) is one such participant and her story exemplifies the tensions. As the second youngest child in a social team/sport-oriented family, which I call the ‘sporty family’; Annie understood the value of integrating physical activity into her social schedule from the direct experience gained
from her family upbringing. Still living in the family home with her parents and younger brother meant that her personal experience continued to be reinforced. Aged 23, she described being at a three-way junction in her life, having to make decisions about her loyalty to the twice-weekly family sporting team, spending time with her new boyfriend (including going to the gym with him in the mornings), and having her own daily down time to recover from the emotional rigours of her new job as a social worker. This type of junction represents a stage of life when young adults are looking to find their own ‘groove’ or create their own way of living their daily life as an adult.

During the interview, she described using the values from her sporty family upbringing to guide the decisions she was currently making. Although these values helped her decide to go to the gym regularly with her boyfriend and occasionally back-fill for her family team, she was yet to reconcile the drain on her energy of the daily requirements of her new job.

While participants explained how they achieved mental health benefits mostly through relaxation, social contact with friends and family remained central to reducing stress in their lives. Most referred to physical activity as exercise; indeed, they used the terms interchangeably. The vast majority dismissed the notion that physical activity could be relaxing or would be something to do in their spare time. In their minds, to be physically active in leisure is to exercise, and exercise takes effort, and effort is not leisure. For young adults, leisure time is for relaxing, not being physically active. For most of them, physical activity only became part of their lifestyle if they were trying to manage their weight (and so was hardly a ‘leisure’ activity). Alternatively, if physical activity had played a positive role in their lives when they were teenagers, they may have found themselves wanting to reclaim some of that enjoyment and play again as an adult.
5.1.1.4 Leisure as a shared experience. Participants also wanted to share experiences with other people and especially people for whom they cared. Joining clubs or associations such as gyms, social sporting teams and competitions as well as going to nightclubs, restaurants, cinemas and shopping malls all entail a desire to share leisure experiences with others outside the home.

Other people often acted as motivators for their leisure. However, the social aspects of leisure, such as meeting for coffee or walking and catching up with friends, featured more strongly among female respondents than among males in all three field sites. Women, mostly from the 18–24 year old age group, noted the importance of family and friends in their concepts of leisure. The companionship provided by family and friends was important during their leisure experiences, often providing the additional motivation to participate regularly in activities, and ultimately enhancing their experience.

The online environment is another important—albeit sedentary—dimension of young adult leisure experiences. Interviewees reported using computers for their leisure, particularly social networking platforms such as Facebook combined with emails and mobile phones to keep in contact. They relied on mobile phones to keep in touch. These platforms and devices played a pivotal role in organising leisure activities. Alongside this responsiveness to invitations from friends and family to socialise was the exposure to advertising that is ubiquitous in cyber space. Some reported that online computer gaming was a way to relax while interacting with others, and others used online auction sites such as eBay to buy and sell personal items as a form of recreation. A few young men also enjoyed online gambling as a part of their recreation.

5.1.2 The purpose of leisure: ‘X’ factors for the ‘Y’ generation. In response to questions about the purpose of leisure, the central concepts of enjoyment, relaxation
and choice were common themes among all participants. Part of the ideal of leisure time was that it was their own free time with the notion of ownership of this time, and what they would do with it. The overwhelming majority nominated a preference for sedentary and social leisure pursuits over active options; however, several from the outer-metropolitan area had a more balanced expectation between social physical activity and sedentary leisure. Participants also used terms such as ‘fun’ and ‘entertainment’. The purpose of leisure was personal enjoyment and relaxation. From the focus group discussions and individual interviews, I note these as being very important factors influencing the leisure time practices of participants in this study. The strength of this discourse is shown in the wide variety of similar terms to describe the purpose or desired effects of leisure, as shown with the nine R’s of leisure (relax, reboot, rejuvenate, regenerate, renew, re-centre, re-energise, release and relief). When collected in this way, it is possible to see the psychological health objectives of young adults aiming to nurture themselves. It is as though they were signalling a need to take back or recover something they had lost or postponed during the time they had been duty bound (at work or study).

With regard to the aim to relax after work or studies, most interviewees felt that they needed gentle activities that required little or no energy to help them unwind. However, some made a clear distinction between the types of energy they needed in order to recharge. A few said they really only feel rejuvenated after high-energy activities. For example, three said leisure time had to include physically active outdoor activities: Ainslie (IMI20) and childhood friends Keegan and Doug (OMPI05 and OMPI06). Growing up together in Beenleigh, Keegan and Doug enjoyed riding BMX bikes for both transport and fun at the local BMX park and surrounding bushland, and they now shared a passion for wake boarding and cycling more generally. Also thriving
in the outdoors, Ainslie described growing up in Canada and discovering outdoor
adventure pursuits during high school. Her current favourite leisure activities were rock
climbing and cycling for transport, which were fun and invigorating and ‘a good type of
exhausting’ (Ainslie, IMPI20). All three of these participants expressed their joy at
being outside and active in everyday living. However, they were the exceptions.

By contrast, Liz described exercise as health maintenance and in a different
category from leisure and concluded that leisure ‘definitely does not include exercise’
(her emphasis; Liz, IMPI05). Exactly what they did in leisure time seemed to matter to
some, but not all. What seemed to matter most was whether they felt compelled to
participate and whether they had a sense of ownership. This freedom from compulsion
remained the defining quality of any leisure activity for them.

5.1.2.1 Sensation seeking and personal enjoyment (it ain’t exercise!). For the
most part, study participants indicated they were seeking an emotional high as a primary
aspect from their leisure—some type of pleasure or enjoyment—rather than a
biomedical or physical outcome such as weight management or reduced risk of heart
disease. I use the overarching theme of sensation seeking here to reflect the various
sensations described by respondents when asked about the benefits of their leisure and
the types of things that enabled and inhibited their participation in those pursuits.
Ostensibly, they were seeking sensations during their spare time, such as pleasure or
satisfaction, and were aiming for a meaningful level of emotional reaction or response.

What motivated their leisure pursuits varied by both gender and locality. Rural
respondents, particularly the younger men, mentioned adrenalin buzz, newness/novelty,
sense of achievement and personal interest as motivating what they did in their leisure
time, whereas rural young women identified feelings of competence, knowing what I am
doing and enjoyment. By contrast, interviewees from the urban locations described a
much broader suite of motivators for their leisure and LTPA: *promotions, other people, fun, personal growth, opportunity, money, achieving something, being creative, challenges, avoiding boredom, personal challenges, overcome fear, health benefits—mental & physical, to relax and enjoy activities, competition, big sports event on TV, need for fitness, new items for pursuits, fun, social opportunity, stubbornness about failure, paying for things, fun and inexpensive, trying new things and adrenalin.*

5.1.2.1.1 Wanting to feel the highs. Some of the participants commented on the accepted use of illicit and licit drugs to enhance their experience during certain leisure pursuits such as nightclubbing and socialising with friends. Their perceptions shed light on the nature of risk-taking behaviour for young adults.\(^5\) When talking about his own practices, Angelo (IMPI10), a young Italian man on a working holiday in Australia, provided the straightforward explanation: that taking marijuana and other drugs sometimes helped him feel relaxed and sociable when out nightclubbing. Enjoying the experience and meeting new women was an important part of the experience for Angelo. He explained how he thought less about the illegal nature of the drugs that he was consuming and more about the fun-loving young women that he liked to meet, despite the impact an altercation with the law would have had on his visa situation. When describing his rationale, Angelo acknowledged that he was living in the moment and wanted to savour it.

For many participants, taking perceived or actual risks during the leisure activity increased their enjoyment of that activity. The urban rather than the rural interviewees were the most open about discussing using or abusing alcohol or illegal drugs. Legal

\(^5\) Other interviewees may also have been engaging in similar or higher risk activities, but did not disclose them at the time of interview.
leisure pursuits that also involve physical risks, albeit of a different kind, for example, rock climbing, motor cycle racing, spear fishing and ‘professional’ (performance/staged) wrestling were mentioned less frequently. Some of the young men mentioned the attraction of the adrenalin rush associated with riding fast motorbikes, risking injury in the wrestling ring or spearfishing in the ocean as attractions to those leisure activities.

5.1.2.1.2 Physical activity: Necessary evil and mechanism for health. Most respondents viewed physical activity (or exercise) mainly as a mechanism to maintain health or, when necessary, for transport, rather than as an opportunity for social interaction, relaxation or fun. Table 5.1 highlights where interview participants describe the key characteristics of physical activity and leisure. The differences in perceptions and therefore expectations identified in the two columns show why people would be reluctant to take up the health promotion messages to be active in their spare time.

Most inner-metropolitan participants described walking as a necessary form of transport rather than as a leisure preference, recreational or fitness activity. While they clearly appreciated the functionality of the numerous shared paths, dedicated pedestrian bridges and multiple modes of public transport, some of the older participants also mentioned the beauty of the paths by the Brisbane River and through South Bank. By contrast, nearly a third of the interviewees in the outer-metropolitan area mentioned walking as a recreational activity in its own right. In the outer suburbs, couples, people needing to walk their dogs and those seeking a sense of personal space, mentioned walking for leisure predominantly. Although more walked for leisure, they discussed the amenity of the paths and sometimes their perceptions of safety, rather than the aesthetics of the parkland or suburbs.
Table 5.1

Participants’ Perceptions of the Characteristics of Physical Activity and Leisure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leisure is about . . .</th>
<th>Physical activity is about . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being social</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low energy (Sedentary or low-level physical activity)</td>
<td>Discomfort/pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Health maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laid back</td>
<td>Time constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not bound by time</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Through her simple observation: ‘no one enjoys exercise really’, Liz (IMPI05) highlighted what other interviews intimated: the enjoyment of physical activity must be present in order for it to be leisure, and because most people do not enjoy exercise, they will be unlikely to include it in their free time. Many people felt uncomfortable when they exercised, and specifically did not appreciate the discomfort they felt when exercising in the extremes of winter and summer. Although they did not elaborate on this, it was clear that exercise and other forms of physical activity connoted pain or at least effort. That simple fact was the proverbial elephant in the room. Similar comments made by a number of participants reflected the interchangeability of the terms physical activity and exercise: ‘exercise if enjoyed is leisure, if not is work, more like health maintenance’ (Sean, IMPI06). Tom offered this way of viewing the conundrum that differentiates between LTPA, leisure and health maintenance: ‘health maintenance equals fitness, don’t necessarily enjoy it because it hurts; leisure relaxes, laid back, unbounded by time; recreation is more active, competitive, good equipment preferable’ (Tom, IMPI09).

Overall, a quote from Lucy (IMPI14) encapsulates the sentiments of her peers: leisure, by definition, is about ‘effortless enjoyment . . . where there’s no great pressure on me to perform’. The absence of effort and pressure to perform is a key element in
defining what leisure really was for these young adults. To them, leisure was easy and enjoyable—not strenuous or taxing.

5.2 The Temporal Dimension of Leisure

Many respondents referred to different types of time in their descriptions in ways that reflect temporal, quality, purpose and ownership dimensions of leisure. They commonly used phrases such as *spare time, down time, passing time, my time, time for self, non-paid free/spare time* and *time off* to describe leisure. Only a few elaborated on the temporal dimensions of leisure. One of these few, Tom (IMPI09) (quoted above) clarified a differentiation between two types of time for his leisure. He used the terms *scheduled* and *serendipitous* leisure time to indicate the separation of work and non-work aspects within his life. For him, leisure either occurred in time he devoted to it (what he called ‘scheduled leisure’) or was used to fill a gap when he was not engaging in necessary activities such as work (what he called ‘serendipitous leisure’). He further divided his spare time into sections for exercise (which, in his words was ‘more like health maintenance time’) and relaxation, which he said was typically sedentary.

Two other participants described the type of time commitment involved in healthful amounts of physical activity, as Tom did. Most perceived it as conflicting with their descriptions of leisure as being free time available to relax and recharge. They alluded to a sense of duty about exercising for physical health that put it at odds with their explanations of leisure or leisure time. With the exception of those who already had health issues such as depression or asthma and used physical activity to help
Time and Transitions

manage their conditions, the duty implied in maintaining one’s health to prevent chronic illness did not interested most participants. Unless they became ill and were compelled to, any compulsion to be physically active deterred individuals from engaging with the PA practices.

Interviewees predominantly understood leisure in terms of the quality of experience and in terms of time. They all framed leisure in positive ways with some reflecting on the way they consciously used their free time and how this had changed as they matured. When forecasting the changes to her leisure after finishing university, Alison (RPI13) explained that she would probably have less time and energy for her leisure. She anticipated that she would be ‘more tired because of work’ and so was planning to work part-time to ensure that she had energy and time for one of her main leisure pursuits—ministry in her local church group—which she considered one of her leisure pursuits. Alison’s faith-based community activities influenced both with whom she socialised and the activities she in which she was involved on the weekends. Although participating in weekend ministry absorbed much of her time and enriched her socially and spiritually, she found the artistic endeavours of painting and playing musical instruments personally enriching. Likewise, Annie (OMPI11) felt that her first job since graduating from university drained her of the time and energy she would have liked to devote to herself and her relationships with others. The quandary Annie faced was about ‘fitting in’ her new boyfriend, family sporting commitments and herself after managing her emotionally draining job as a youth worker.

Clara, Mary and Joel each discussed their commitment to exercise to help them deal with various issues in their lives (the combination of depression and being overweight for Clara [RPI04] and Mary [OMPI09], and dealing with anger for Joel [IMPI06]).
The common thread throughout the participant interviews was that spare time (they perceived as leisure time) was not for physical activity (they perceived as exercise). If physical activity was a part of a young adult’s life, then it occurred in another type of time, with its own descriptor—in allocated health maintenance time. Participants felt that their mental health gains were achieved, by and large, through enjoyable sedentary pursuits such as watching a movie, eating and drinking, and meeting with friends and family. In these situations, they could relax and recharge their emotional batteries.

5.2.1 Upbringing: Imbuing habits. In the initial part of the in-depth interviews, I asked participants about their family, where they lived as a child, their family home and yard, and their experiences of leisure and physical activity during childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. They reflected on the types of play and recreational pursuits in which they participated while growing up, with many including the role modelling from parents or significant others in their lives. In doing so, their reflections revealed some of the central components of their inculcation into various physical activity practices that had stayed with them into early adulthood as a habit or lifestyle.

A key enabler of physical activity for all interviewees in their youth was the role played by the parent(s) or parent figure. Whether it was a parent arranging for their child to continually participate in organised dance, gymnastics or sport, allowing or encouraging them to go outside and play; or involving them in their own adult sporting team or activity; the impact of these inclusions (or omissions for those participants who did not have such influences) on the current practices of these interviewees was evident in their interviews. Stories from across the study sites reinforced the enabling influence of their parents in providing them with opportunities for outdoor play and therefore avenues for their early confidence and independence to be physically active. I saw
Time and Transitions
evidence of the strongest and longest-lasting impact by far with the sporty family, in
which all four adult children continued to play weekly sport with their parents and
unstructured active games on weekends.

Even with the space restrictions common to inner-city suburbs, or the lack of
direct role modelling by parents, most interviewees from the city area said their parents
at least allowed them to utilise a variety of spaces within their local area for active
outdoor play as children. Other common ingredients included combinations of home
yard space, equipment, surrounding parklands, vacant blocks of land and access to
nearby facilities such as a swimming pool and a tennis court.

5.2.1.1 Inculcation. The four siblings from the sporty family in the outer-
metropolitan study site exemplify the inculcation into a habitus where LTPA is the
norm. Each of the four siblings highlighted a whole-of-family approach to physical
activity that continued to be a major component of their current LTPA practices. They
described how their parents played social netball and touch football once a week and
would take them along, first as observers and being cared for by others on the sideline,
and then later as team members when they were old enough. In addition, the family
would regularly enjoy extended family picnics in a local park on Sundays, often
throwing a football or frisbee. Just as a community of practice operates in a professional
setting, this type of family practice had effectively indoctrinated the children through
immersion and expectation from an early age. The siblings felt that this practice
partially influenced whom they partnered with (other physically active or oriented
people) and what they expected of their partners (that they join in the regular LTPA
opportunities engaged in by the family).

According to the four siblings interviewed, this social practice had prevailed for
as long as they could remember and they considered it a key characteristic of their
immediate and extended family. Geoff, husband of the oldest sister, Catherine, and Alistair, boyfriend of the third sister, Annie, both had a similar interest in sport and physical activity before partnering with the sisters and joining the family’s activities. An interesting case is Alistair, who grew up participating in organised sport as well as impromptu, regular skateboarding, roller-skating and body surfing, but he did not really recall seeing his parents prioritising leisure or physical activity. It was not until his uncle bought him a skateboard that he joined in with the other teenagers in the neighbourhood who rode skateboards and discovered the social benefit of physical activity in a group. Alistair described it as being ‘social with friends even if he didn’t feel like it’ and acknowledged that he ‘improved his skills when in groups with role models’ providing guidance (OMPI12). He also explained how his after-school routine of going to the homes of friends whose families were very physically active became a positive influence in his life. As well as joining in with the sporty family’s beach netball team, Alistair went to the gym two or three times a week with Annie and once or twice each weekend.

From a different type of family upbringing, New Zealand–born Rod (OMPI08) explained the importance of the traditional aspects of his Maori culture. He remembered a water-oriented, outdoor lifestyle during his childhood in New Zealand, which his family continued when they moved to Australia during his adolescence. Fishing, water activities, golf, running, rugby and anything outdoors featured in his youth. He maintained his affinity with the water through spear fishing and diving as an adult and

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7 Three out of the four siblings were partnered at the time of the research but only two of these partners were available for interview.
added walking regularly with his pregnant partner, Mary, around the lake near his parents’ home where they both live.

5.2.1.2 **Opportunities for physically active play and active transport.** Being raised in an environment with options for riding a bicycle to school, organised physical activity and backyard outdoor play was a common thread for the Australian-born participants. Whether it was in the suburban backyard or in rural bush land, participants fondly remembered the unstructured outdoor play as part of their childhood. In adolescence, most replaced this type of play with organised physical activities such as team sports, whilst a few replaced it with dance classes. Now, as young adults, many of them engaged in some physical activity but perceived it more as a necessity to maintain their health than as an enjoyable thing they did as a choice or habit.

When recounting their exposure to physical activity as a child and adolescent, more interviewees from the rural and outer-metropolitan areas described engaging in outdoor free-range play than those from the city. Even after accounting for the inner-metropolitan participants raised in another type of area, the experiences of the young adults who lived there now described childhood outdoor free-range play preceding their involvement in physical activity as a young adult. Figure 5.3 shows the experiences of participants with physical activity throughout their lives. It shows the proportion of interviewees who described regular physical activity in their youth through structured/organised physical activities, free-range play, active outdoor play or active transport.
While unstructured play and organised physical activities featured strongly in their recollections, active transport featured relatively little, and involvement in groups such as Scouts and Guides not at all. Participating in outdoor free-range play as a child as well as organised physical activity during childhood and adolescence enabled participants to explore their immediate surroundings with a degree of freedom that many interviewees recalled with joy and excitement. Interviewees used terms such as running amuck and roaming around to describe the freedom experienced during these opportunities. Participants such as Simon (RPI07) described ‘running amuck’ in the sense of roaming freely and making their own form of play—free-range play, outside and unsupervised by adults. This sense of being free to muck around featured strongly in the descriptions of childhood and adolescent leisure of many of the rural young adults. They described play practices such as building cubby houses, playing adapted sports such as backyard cricket, or riding push bikes in the street as their regular (and favourite) leisure time pursuits. These were coded as ‘outdoor child(hood) play’ for the

Figure 5.3. Experience with physical activity by study area. child = childhood; out = outdoor; adol = adolescent; PA = physical activity; AT = active transport; YA = young adult; LTPA = leisure time physical activity.
purposes of data analysis. As an enabler, the opportunities for outdoor play occurred in all three study sites and involved combinations of the family backyard or farm, neighbour’s yard or farm, vacant blocks and the local streets.

Many of the recollections reflect the seemingly simple yet potent combination of inculcation and neighbourhood characteristics. Still living in his childhood home suburb in the outer-metropolitan area, Jim (OMPI21) remembered how his father’s involvement in playing soccer when he was 15 encouraged him to continue playing soccer as an independent adult. He also recalled being allowed to spend a great deal of time at the local skate park until the age of about 14, and he often made his own way there and back, either walking or running with his skateboard. By his mid-teens, he had become involved in club soccer, family beach trips, cross-country running, some social physical activity and tenpin bowling occasionally with friends. He continued his participation in soccer, running and going to the beach as an adult and included going to the gym in his routine. Jim’s story was similar to those of many of the men interviewed with reference to the influence of an adult male in their formative years. Female role models did not figure as clearly for the young women or young men.

5.2.1.3 How the environment contributes to leisure time physical activity

practice. Most participants said that the physical, social and economic environment they experienced while growing up greatly influenced their current attitudes to leisure. This was especially so for respondents who were raised in a rural environment, where the dual effect of the extra distances to travel for everyday events, and the limited range and availability of goods, services and facilities placed additional financial burden on their families. With the greater independence of young adulthood, these rural participants discussed not just the extra burden on their finances and time that living rurally
represented, but specifically the lack of things that they enjoyed doing that were also physically active.

Without seeming to resent it, living in a rural area had, by default, inculcated the residents into a way of living that values habits of frugality and straightforwardness. For example, Jason (RPI05) felt that his rural upbringing had shaped the way he rationalised the costs in time and money for his preferred leisure pursuits. He put it down to the ‘way [being] raised in a place like Gin Gin [where] leisure pursuits don’t need to cost money’. He explained that lack of options in Gin Gin in combination with its geographical isolation encouraged people to occupy themselves in their own way during their spare time, and that this was quite normal as well as good. His main personal example was tinkering around home in his shed, working with wood and sculpting. This encouraged him to work with his hands, expressing the practical side of his nature and providing a great sense of personal satisfaction. Across the three study sites, only rural participants mentioned this kind of tinkering as a leisure pursuit.

As an involved community member and local teacher, one of the rural key informants, Bernadette, observed that tinkering is an important leisure pursuit for rural young men: ‘the farm guys, the real bushies, tinker with machines’ (Bernadette, RKI02). She made the connection between the low socio-economic positioning (SEP) of the rural area, the essential nature of car ownership and tinkering as a leisure pursuit:

SES and gender—male lower demographic group is cars, cars, cars—if they’re not talking about the cars they’re fixing their cars, polishing their cars, or they’re doing something to their cars . . . and that’s because they are the main transport item and they can’t necessarily afford to pay a tradesperson for the fixing. The girls sit there and watch the boys tinker with and polish their cars. (Bernadette, RKI02)
Despite the rationale, Jason’s explanation and personal example epitomises the dilemma common to most rural participants. With the exception of facilities for walking, running, swimming and cycling provided by council, accessible options for other physically active forms of leisure were not within the easy reach of the young adults of Gin Gin. The dilapidated sporting facilities were hardly inviting, so in order to play team sports, dance, do yoga or martial arts, or join a gym class, they had to drive 50 km to Bundaberg, incurring fuel and vehicle running costs.

Jason’s explanation of the effect of area disadvantage highlights an important social dimension of leisure practice in the rural area. Rural young adults necessarily conceived of leisure as being much more than a personally rewarding pursuit in their free time. Primarily, it needed to be inexpensive and physically accessible. When participants were asked what they would do for leisure if they had unlimited money but the same amount of leisure time as they did currently, rural respondents generally focused on using money for local travel to spend time with family and friends, theme park visits, and buying musical instruments or home-based entertainment systems. This contrasts with the responses from the urban participants who nominated overseas travel.

**5.2.1.4 Moving freely: Associations with active transport.** Those in the metropolitan areas did not mention walking, riding bicycles or skateboards, either for active transport or for recreation, despite there being more and better infrastructure and hence opportunities in the inner-city area to do these things. By contrast, participants from the rural area clearly recalled their use of the school bus, riding bicycles or sometimes walking in their youth to travel to local places, and then experiencing a big change in their physical activity and transport patterns when they started to drive. Both key informants and participants in Gin Gin mentioned obtaining a driver’s licence and a car as a marker of independence upon leaving school. Despite the enjoyment of open
spaces and the rural environs, all rural participants noted the hefty impost of driving on their spare time and disposable income. In the absence of public transport or taxi service in this rural area, they needed their own motorised transport for the 50 km journey by car to the nearest major civic hub of Bundaberg for recreation, work or study. This was a recurrent theme throughout the rural interviews and was a notable disadvantage to living there for a young adult.

Bernadette (RKI02) moved to Gin Gin about five years before her interview and her observations of the rural young women watching young men tinkering with cars touches on a gendered view of leisure. Her comments are a reminder of the different ways of viewing and valuing leisure activities, and that these activities occur within a context that only the insiders themselves may truly understand. Descriptions from a few rural young women who enjoyed being actively engaged in what would be generally described as more male-dominated activities, countered Bernadette’s suggestion of a passive role for young women. Bernadette thought that the young women were sedentary as well as passive because they were not being physically involved in fixing or polishing the cars. However, because 19-year-old Susan (RPI12) discussed her passion for trail bike riding and camping with her boyfriend, it is clear that not all young women in Gin Gin fit this mould. She pointed out the equitable sharing when organising the finances and logistics involved with the transport, food and camping for their weekend leisure. In many rural and remote areas, residents consider motorbike riding both necessary for transport on farms and a recreational pastime for men as well as women. However, it is less common in urban areas for women to ride motorbikes for either transport or recreation. The way Susan’s insider experience differs from Bernadette’s observation as a relative newcomer is a reminder of the different experiences and perspectives held by individuals within each community.
When focus groups from the rural and outer-metropolitan areas categorised leisure activities for their local area (see Appendix D: Table 1 for details), they identified specific activities they thought were more common to either young women or young men in their area. The central features for both, regardless of gender, were that they are inherently social, mainly sedentary, and include watching movies with friends, sharing meals, playing console or video games and, for a few in both areas, fishing. However, the activities suggested by the outer-metropolitan groups involve some different elements than those offered by their rural counterparts. Largely because of the more accessible opportunities in urban areas, they included elements such as a day at the horseraces as a big social event featuring ‘dressing up’, alcohol and betting; and live music festivals, including alcohol and illicit drugs. As well as being largely sedentary, these types of leisure pursuits require time, money and transport not readily available to the rural young adults interviewed.

5.2.1.5 Combined effects of inculcation and neighbourhood characteristics for leisure time physical activity. Two examples pinpoint the greater influence that social settings, rather than physical settings, have on health behaviour. Both examples come from the urban areas and show how parental influences guide the physical activity habits of their children, one for forming active habits and the other for sedentary habits.

The first example is of Shelley and Russell, siblings from the inner-metropolitan area (IMPI02 and 03) who, despite living a comfortable life in South Brisbane within close proximity to an abundance of active leisure opportunities and active transport, were adopting their parent’s sedentary routines. The second and contrasting example is of Catherine, Kerrie, Graham and Annie (OMPI01, 03, 04 and 11), four siblings from the sporty family in the outer-metropolitan area. These siblings also lived within close proximity to a multitude of active options for leisure, and were continuing to join their
parents in regular social sports\textsuperscript{8} and, unlike Shelley and Russell, were very physically active on a regular basis with their family and friends. Although the upbringing of these two groups of siblings shared common elements (childhood free-range play and organised sport or other physical activities in adolescence, as well as ready access to open green spaces, and still living at home as a young adult), the main difference appears to be in the involvement of the children in the social physical activities of their respective parents.

5.2.1.5.1 \ldots from a non-physically active family. Siblings Shelley and Russell made no mention of their parents’ physical activity during their childhood. Instead, Shelley discussed enjoying and ‘adopting’ her parent’s daily routine of sharing drinks and nibbles after work and before dinner (usually spirits with mixers and potato chips). Likewise, Russell did not mention the leisure practices of his parents at all; he focused on his own preference for screen-based entertainment and strong aversion to anything related to exercise or physicality. Therefore, although Shelley and Russell still live in the same privileged household and neighbourhood of their youth, and have easy access to a wide array of options for active recreation and transport, the combination of personal preferences and sharing the rituals of their parents made for sedentary leisure time for them both.

5.2.1.5.2 \ldots from a physically active family. In the sporty family, all four siblings described being actively involved in a great deal of backyard play with each other, and this, they all acknowledged, encouraged their ability to socialise broadly and make their own fun. They found that by having someone to play with all of the time

\textsuperscript{8} As described earlier in this section and supported by the surveys of neighbourhood characteristics summarised in Chapter 6.
they were seldom bored. That they are raised with physical activity as an everyday expectation in their lives (described earlier) is a second defining feature of the siblings. As young adults, they all still played in the weekly games and now included their partners in the team and the Sunday picnic and play tradition. The siblings described a feeling of cohesion and satisfaction through their involvement in these events and a sense of social and strategic support during their leisure time and for their physical activity. They explained how their parents paid for their playing fees while they were studying at school and then university and how they currently shared transport, equipment and sometimes clothing for the team sports.

In terms of neighbourhood characteristics that foster active leisure, local sporting facilities and natural parkland with picnic areas enabled the regular whole-of-family involvement of the sporty family in weekly social physical activity. The availability and access to such amenities complemented the family priorities of recreation and social interaction. Similar facilities existed in the inner-metropolitan area where siblings Shelley and Russell lived; however, neither of them mentioned any family focus on physical activity. The example of these contrasting sets of siblings suggests the relevance of the immediate family hub and parental participation as a sphere of influence.

Regardless of whether parents inculcated their children into active forms of leisure as the norm, all the respondents who described a strong thread of physical activity throughout their lives mentioned the hands-on involvement of one or more of their parents in their physical activity, in combination with the provision of physical space to play in the family yard and home. Importantly, respondents who did not describe this pattern referred to themselves as being far less physically active in their current lives than those who did.
5.2.1.6 Difficult transitions during adolescence. About half of the respondents recalled experiencing challenging times during their adolescence and a corresponding drop in their involvement in physical activity that continued into their young adulthood. The one exception to this is Alice (OMPI17), who remembered turning towards more rather than less physical activity as a teenager and seeking solace for her problems in the physicality of a combination of social team sports, rollerblading and bike riding. Reflecting what she described as a predisposition to enjoying being active in the first place, she said she used these activities to escape an untenable situation at home and supplement the social support she lacked living at home.

As a whole, though, participants who described difficult living situations in adolescence explained that their current strategies for living revolved around gaining or regaining the social and physical confidence to be active and avoid further bouts of depression and anxiety. Most of these respondents described unhappy social lives in their youth that dented their confidence and limited their physical activity, particularly as adolescents, when much of the disruptions occurred. The need to ‘fit in’ with a peer group to some extent guided the choice of which physical activity in which to be involved, rather than whether to be physically active or not. They recalled not participating in anything active if they could not find a suitable peer group to join at the time.

Regardless of where they lived then or at the time of the interview, the difficult changes during adolescence had an impact on their confidence to participate fully in many social pursuits, especially physically active ones. Interviewees described the effects of uneasy transitions in life as lost opportunities for LTPA during their youth. For some, the trauma of a combined family break-up and a forced move when they were younger unsettled them both geographically and socially. They recalled reaching a point
of social dislocation when they either shut themselves off from others, or adapted their own physical activity preferences to suit the new social environment, even when it was not their preferred thing to do.

Clara (RPI04) shared her story of disruptive transition during adolescence that led to her current struggle with her weight and suffering from depression. She recalled a happy childhood building cubby houses, playing by the creek and go-carting on a large rural property just outside of Gin Gin. However, when her life was turned upside down by a move overseas with her parents for missionary work in a densely populated city in South America, she retreated into herself and her music. Deemed too young (at about the age of 15) to remain in Gin Gin with her older siblings, Clara felt forcibly transplanted into a crowded new world. In the comparatively confined spaces of this foreign place, she retreated to her comfort zone of music and learned to play the acoustic guitar as a way of coping with the stark cultural differences. She remembered the social environment for teenagers dominated by soccer and basketball. However, for Clara, who described herself as ‘not at all sporty—hated sports’, this failed to resonate, and she felt that her only way to be authentic was to play her preferred music and shut out the crowded unwanted influences. Now as a young woman, and back living near her hometown, she enjoyed long walks, swimming and playing some squash and touch football, as well as a bit of solo ‘mucking around’ on the local basketball court for leisure (Clara, RPI04).

Reflecting on her childhood on a 100-acre farm, 18-year-old Tilly (RPI17) remembered swimming in the home dam and playing tag games with older siblings. During her adolescence, her parents moved around a great deal for work throughout inland Queensland, taking her with them but leaving her older siblings behind in Gin Gin. During these times, her laptop computer became her social connection with
friends, especially when the intense summer heat made physical activity outside uncomfortable. She found herself spending increasing amounts of time on social networking sites and little time outside or with others. After finally returning to Gin Gin and beginning studies at the regional TAFE, she now felt more settled and had begun tenpin bowling in Bundaberg as her leisure time activity of choice. Alongside her challenges with social isolation, she discussed her ongoing battles with depression and being overweight, which, in her opinion, only complicated the issues of her isolation during her adolescence (Tilly, RPI17).

A similar focus on the mental health benefits of having time and opportunities for leisure was reinforced by numerous other participants who also opted for sedentary leisure pursuits at difficult times, and many participants talked about the importance of socialising with a support network of family and friends. The quality and type of their leisure time became pivotal to their mental and physical health. They described how it was the most sedentary of leisure pursuits—most commonly sharing a meal—that they felt they needed and therefore preferred during these times. The comfort they derived from sharing food rather than physical activity suggests that the nature of convivial social and culinary occasions will likely triumph over something more energetic in times of emotional difficulty. Even when the times were not so much difficult as simply tiring, almost all participants favoured sedentary ways to recover.

The recollections shared by four of these participants: Clara, Alice, Lucy and Tom (all aged in their mid-to-late 20s), signal what may be at the heart of the issues

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9 A summary of the 10 key participants in this category is provided in Appendix C: Table C.2, which shows the different disruptions in their lives and the impact of these on their participation in LTPA during adolescence. The common denominator for each of the 10 examples is the adolescent time period and the impact it had on their LTPA at that time and into adulthood.
surrounding physical activity participation rates for young adults; the way they linked their handling of difficult life events during adolescence with their own physical activity regimes during that time and how they continued these behaviours into adulthood. Their stories reflected their acknowledgement of the benefits of exercise for personal health and an ability to act for their own health. With the additional maturity that a few more years of life experience brings, these four also drew a distinction between their physical activity to maintain their mental and physical health and being physically active for other reasons (e.g., purely for transport). Their descriptions of why this had come about and how they now took more control over their lives suggest a high level of self-efficacy for being autonomously physically active. For example, 28-year-old Tom acknowledged that he had to find his own direction as an adult. After a few years of living away from home as an older teenager, partying hard, drinking and playing soccer semi-professionally failed to satisfy him, he came to realise the value of exercising for physical and mental fitness.

As another case in point, Roland described the separation of his parents during his formative years causing a major disruption to his schooling and sporting activities. He explained how he participated in some different activities to gain acceptance in his new school and tried to support his mother at home more:

Roland: Yeah, my brother moved out at the same time as my parents separated, so he’d moved out and well we actually went for holidays at my uncle’s place and then we came back, oh I came back, and I found out that my parents were separated, so bit tough . . . moving around [like] that was probably what really helped me, I guess, it probably made me, kinda, well like it was obviously a new start and that sort of thing, which is probably, now that I look back on it, was sorta what I needed at the time.
Time and Transitions

Interviewer: . . . how did your leisure activities change? Do you remember?

Roland: I felt a lot more confident so I felt more confident that I could [do what] I wanted to do, instead of just playing touch football with everyone else kind of thing. I sort of started doing more of my own thing, and that people would kind of follow with that, instead of just following on with everyone else, which was great because then it was something that I actually wanted to do myself.

(Roland, RPI19)

Although his family splitting up initially unsettled Roland, he described coming to appreciate how he found a new freedom to play a mixture of traditional and non-traditional games at school, such as soccer and hacky sack, and then archery after school, and cooking for his mother at home.

The story that 20-year-old Jordan told revealed a troubled adolescence that led to an intentionally life-changing move across the country to where he currently lived in Gin Gin. He recalled a very unhappy and unsettled schooling in Perth. A combination of expulsion from multiple schools, a couple of unsuccessful attempts to finish Year 11 and mixing with ‘the wrong crowd’ had led him into trouble multiple times with the local police. Jordan explained his recent move to Gin Gin, approximately 4,600 km from suburban Perth, Western Australia, under the wing of an older family friend, as a desperate attempt to escape being in constant trouble with the police and start life afresh. Although it had only been six weeks since his move, Jordan was optimistic about his future. He felt he had ‘changed quite a bit, yes, I haven’t gotten into trouble here, and ah it’s been pretty sweet pretty much, you know’ (Jordan, RPI02):

Jordan: I flew, on a one-way ticket

Interviewer: One-way ticket, so you don’t want to go home?
Time and Transitions

Jordan: oh, I want to go home, but not now. It feels good to get me out of Perth, ’cos in Perth I was getting in a shit there . . . I was gettin’ into a lot of trouble . . . just with the police, like, back in Perth you go into a pub and see, get into a lot of that? And over here, nobody knows me, so it’s easier to get around, sort of thing.

Interviewer: So do you think it’s changed a bit?

Jordan: It’s changed quite a bit . . . (Jordan RPI02)

Prior to moving to Gin Gin, Jordan’s physical activity involved motorcross riding, playing AFL, and lifting weights at the local gym. However, as a new arrival in a small rural town, he was finding it difficult to continue these pursuits and make new friends. He bemoaned the lack of a gym in Gin Gin and public transport to Bundaberg, where there are gyms. He was finding it equally difficult to obtain permanent work so he could afford his own transport. While discussing the differences between suburban Perth and rural Gin Gin, Jordan revealed an important aspect of the neighbourhood characteristics that influenced his capacity to make new friends and highlighted the need for him adapt to his new surroundings.

As a newcomer to the small rural town, he was looking for positive friendship groups with which to pursue the type of physical activities that he knew would help him settle in, belong and make this a successful new start in life. Given the popularity of touch football in the rural area, Jordan’s narrow focus on pursuing AFL (a specific football code not played as much in Queensland as other codes) was narrowing his already limited opportunities for gaining acceptance in the rural town. Despite his desire

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10 Australian Football League (AFL) is a code of football originating in Australia in the mid-1800s (AFL, n.d.).
to be more active, he had declined an offer by a work colleague to play at the local soccer club on Friday evenings.

In a convoluted way, Jordan explained his default position for familiar types of physical activity also reflected in many other interviews:

Jordan: Yeh, trying to. It’s the closest gym around here.

Interviewer: Yeh, yeh, there’s no gym. So do you reckon, like what sort of stuff, would you normally go to the gym?

Jordan: Um, if I was in a place like this, and there was a gym I would be goin’ to the gym, but in a place like Perth, I’d just be out with my mates.

. . .

Jordan: So there’s nothing else to do here, but even, you know, if there was a gym here, I’d go to the gym, but there’s no gym, if there was a motorcross track as well, I’d go to motorcross (unclear) in Perth as well, but not here, so . . .

(Jordan, RPI02)

Nineteen-year-old Eddie’s story (OMPI07) is yet another that highlights the effects of difficult life transitions during adolescence. Eddie spent his childhood in Gin Gin, where he enjoyed being involved in Little Athletics and playing on the trampoline. Whether by coincidence or consequence, he became less interested in sports at high school at the same time as his parents divorced. Afterwards, he and his mother moved to Bundaberg, where his interest turned towards going to the local gym to lift weights, ‘build himself up’ and maintain a level of fitness. Now as a young adult living in the Beenleigh area, his physical activity extended only to dancing when sufficiently drunk at nightclubs in Beenleigh or nearby Logan and then walking home. He said he was thinking about finding a gym to join so he could take up weights and maybe boxing again but yet had not really investigated where he could do this. Eddie’s situation
appeared conducive to using his spare time for some physical activity (he earned a
steady full-time income, lived in a share house where he had minimal chores, had past
experience with and professed an appreciation of the benefits of being more active).
Despite this, he was unaware of the existence of a nearby low-cost gym run by the
Police Citizens Youth Club and was struggling to make the next step of finding out
what was available to him and then joining in.

Eddie’s position represented a combination of factors that was missing the key
ingredient of a social support structure. In theory, he had everything going for him, but
he lacked the friend(s) or family to act as external links. Likewise, Jordan’s final remark
in the previous case shows good intention, and collectively, the examples provided by
Jordan, Eddie and siblings Shelley and Russell suggest that, even when opportunities
are present, the external support or trigger provided by having others with which to
participate is often the key to actually doing it. For Clara and Tilly, the missing key
ingredient was a smooth passage through adolescence, the effects of which they felt
they were still processing as adults. All cases, however, point to the importance of
maintaining stable social networks as supports for young people to stay physically
active.

5.2.1.7 Learning about life balance. The experience of starting full-time work
while maintaining a steady relationship affected the capacity of many interviewees to be
active, as exemplified in my interview with Annie (sibling number three in the sporty
family). She described feeling drained of energy as she tried to adapt to the competing
expectations of a trio of commitments—the emotional strain and frenetic pace of her
work in the community welfare sector, biweekly family sporting commitments and
seeing her boyfriend, Alistair, during the week. Her main coping strategy was to opt out
of the family netball and touch football teams and participate only when needed to ‘fill a
gap’ in the team. With a tinge of regret, Annie acknowledged that by breaking with the family tradition she had more early mornings to attend gym sessions before work. This functioned especially well for her when she slept at her boyfriend’s house and they went to the gym together in the morning.

Other interviewees also discussed having to commit to scheduled leisure activities as a barrier to participation, but Annie explained how the additional layer of a new relationship and complicated managing her own time and energy in her first full-time job. Her solution of consolidating her physical activity commitments to fit in other activities was similar to the strategies described by other interviewees, especially those aged 18–24 years.

5.2.1.8 The influence of perceptions of self on leisure time physical activity:

Identifying as sporty or not sporty. While discussing their experiences of physical activity during their school years, most participants mentioned the relationship between their sense of self, the physical environment and their experiences of scheduled school sport, particularly during the heat of summer. In this context, their perception of themselves in relation to sport emerged as important for some of them. These participants described how small yet memorable aspects of formal schooling helped shape their relationship with sport and helped inform their understanding of physical activity more broadly. In situations in which they were unwillingly compelled to participate in exercise, usually a PE class, their resentment had a lasting negative impact on their attitudes to being active that was still with them. Throughout their interviews, these respondents identified as not having a natural affinity with or disposition for exercise or sport. They described themselves either as simply not liking it or more pointedly as being ‘not at all sporty’, as Clara (OMPI04) put it. While most responses ranged from indifference to enjoyment, one participant differentiated between the
Time and Transitions

cmpulsory and the voluntary aspects of sport when she said that she liked social sport but disliked HPE (Leith, RPI14). Another distinction many participants made was between social and organised school sport. They preferred the social school sport (with its more relaxed environment and less structure) to the sport in PE classes.

A few rural interviewees talked about the weather and being physically active, describing how the timetabling of PE classes on hot summer afternoons put them off physical activity and reinforced their dislike for being outside and active in summer. It is possible that participants in the other sites had similar experiences but did not discuss them at interview.

5.3 Economic Factors: Commodified Aspects of Leisure

When describing many aspects of their leisure, it was common for participants to use a commodity framework involving a process of buying or selling items or experiences. Many items or experiences for leisure are purchased or sold and are essential requirements for the activity. For example, to play touch football in an organised competition, one must pay player fees, have suitable running shoes or touch football shoes and wear a team uniform. Similarly, going to the cinema necessitates buying a movie ticket and often food and drinks before or after the movie. Unless the conduct of an activity is in the home, organising transportation to and from a venue is also required. In addition to these elements, interviewees explained their investment of time and computer resources in the process of deciding what to pay for. They described conducting both internet and face-to-face market research, seeking personal recommendations, using auction-style buying web services such as eBay to obtain the best value for their money. Those who devoted a lot of time to this process acknowledged that they enjoyed it, describing it as a leisure activity in itself. Some participants talked quite openly about the value they placed on the actual process of
exchanging money for leisure goods or services and of the enjoyment they gained from shopping as an activity. Others simply wanted to spend their money wisely on what they considered a worthwhile, yet still discretionary item. The rationales they shared for devoting sometimes quite hefty proportions of their incomes to this process indicate the high value they placed on the experience itself. Throughout all of this, their aim was to ensure a high-quality experience by paying for stimulating and often novel activities.

Participants used terms reflecting the idea that leisure pursuits helped to fulfil their emotional needs. As explained earlier in this chapter, most of these words related to what I have coded as sensation-seeking behaviour—wanting to feel something. Many participants, such as Jason (RPI05), perceived value in paying for it, believing that they were obtaining a better quality experience if they paid money for it, and that the more they paid, the better the experience would be. Jason made it clear that pleasurable leisure experiences tend to cost money and improve with more spending.

5.3.1 Having enough money to spend on leisure. The concept of having enough money to spend on leisure reinforces the link to commodified aspects of leisure. The participants’ descriptions elucidate how their value systems were influencing their financial priorities.

Some leisure experiences had a higher status attached to them than others did. Respondents explained how adventurous experiences such as surfing, snorkelling, rock climbing and travelling rated highly when it came to trying something new. Some mentioned exploring boundaries through such activities as body art (tattooing and piercing) or ‘professional’ wrestling, and embracing the privileges and rites of passage of early adulthood through nightclubbing, drinking alcohol and taking illicit drugs. Those who described engaging in these activities said they were trying to avoid
boredom in their spare time, which was a common thread, and apparently an important motivational factor for many participants.

Interviewees considered affordability one of the primary barriers to their full participation in leisure pursuits. Those on low incomes specifically said that they could not afford to take full advantage of the items and opportunities marketed to them as adults and so they skimped in other areas of their budget in order to afford what they truly wanted. Examples of how this mindset played out come from Max, Catherine and married couple Alice and Chris.

Max (RPI03) was a full-time university student earning less than $250 per week gross. He justified affording as much as he could for two separate bicycles and accessories he wanted for different types of cycling—a road bike for transport and a mountain bike for recreation with this explanation:

Max: It’s as expensive as my car . . . it’s $1,500 . . . it’s a good bike, I really enjoy it . . . it’s a nice bike . . . I chose mountain biking as a leisure . . . I don’t spare any expense, I go out and buy a nice bike, I won’t muck around with something that’s not to standard . . . so mountain biking is something I won’t think about ‘is this worth it, expense wise?’ I’ll just, right oh, if that’s really expensive, like, I know it’s going to be good, I’ll do that.

Interviewer: Like an investment?

Max: Yeah . . . and if I got into trial bike riding\(^{11}\), I’d get a separate bike for that . . . yeah, I could spend a lot of money there I suppose if I wanted [on different styles of mountain biking]. (RPI03)

\(^{11}\) Trial bike riding is a discipline within mountain bike riding where riders jump their bicycles from one obstacle to another. It requires a specialised bicycle.
Catherine (OMPI01) explained how she used sales promotions as a way to afford expensive items and stretch the combined weekly earnings (between $1,400 and $1,898 per week gross) for her and her husband, Geoff (OMPI02). Married couple Alice (OMPI117) and Chris (OMPI18) opted to pay weekly fees at their local gym for the motivational benefits of a personal fitness trainer, even though they had a weights room set up at home. Most interviewees, regardless of income levels or other differences, could explain how they balanced the costs associated with life in general with their wants and needs for leisure pursuits.

In some cases, participants shared their concerns about how the costs of living in general limited their aspirations for fuller participation in physical activity. For some, it was difficult to afford the initial set-up costs associated with an active leisure pursuit, and for others, it was more about the ongoing costs involved, which were awkward for them to commit to when their earnings fluctuated because they were working casual jobs. Although costs may have been onerous at the time, the biggest drawcard for any leisure activity was the company of friends and family.

Towards the end of the interviews, I asked participants to nominate whether they would prefer more time or more money for their leisure, and to provide an explanation. In a surprising twist, most of the respondents opted for more time, despite their generally low incomes and stated preferences for quality purchases for leisure. Typically, more money would require working longer hours each day or retraining and upgrading to a higher salaried position, versus aiming for more time for leisure and accepting less paid work (and so having less money). But for those earning a higher income or in dual income households, the ability to pay for what they wanted acted as a very strong enabler for both their purchases and their participation.
Generally, their responses exposed a tension between wanting and having more of one or the other. Nineteen-year-old Sam from Gin Gin summed up this tension with a level of practicality common to others from his rural background: ‘it basically comes down to two magic words . . . time and money—when you’ve got the time to do it you don’t have the money to do it, and if you’ve got the money to do, you don’t have the time’ (RPI11). Sam experienced a similar quandary to other participants with income constraints, especially those who were either under- or unemployed, with time on their hands but very little money, or those who were working multiple jobs on low wages and/or studying and therefore had little time or money for complex or expensive leisure activities.

Almost all them felt in some way that with more money they could effectively ‘buy’ either more time for leisure (such as to purchase more annual leave, or not work as many hours but still have a similar level of income) or improve the quality of experience in that time (e.g., travel abroad for a more exciting or rewarding experience). Although a third of participants did not state their preference during the interviews, Figure 5.4 shows the preference for time by rural participants as well as the almost equal division between time and money in the metropolitan sites.

Much more than their urban counterparts, the rural young adults generally opted for more time, particularly with family and friends. Despite the long distances to access major facilities and services, the majority of interviewees from the rural area explained that their preference for more time to spend with family and friends locally outweighed their struggles with available income and the tyranny of travel in the rural area. This suggests a deeper appreciation of maintaining quality relationships than chasing commodities, as seemed to permeate the metropolitan interviews more. This is not to suggest that the young adults living in metropolitan areas valued personal relationships
less, but rather acknowledges they faced fewer constraints (such as distance and transport options) to maintaining relationships than their rural counterparts.

![Figure 5.4. Preference for either more time or more money to enable participant’s leisure by study site.](image)

Asking the young adults to prioritise having either more time or money for their leisure helped to understand what motives might be guiding some of their health behaviour. Further explanations from some of the older participants highlight a nexus between desire and limitations. Twenty-eight-year-old Tom (IMPI09) believed that ‘if you want to do it you can fund it’ and stated that he would find the money if he really wanted to do something in particular for his lifestyle.

Some of the older interviewees explained the way they carefully utilised their spare time and differentiated between types of time. They perceived that looking after their health was worth allocating some of their available time, and their explanations included regular use of personal and public resources. Whilst I have already discussed their personal resources, the public resources they used related to the place where they
lived and the spaces and facilities provided by or enabled by local government. This was most acute for the rural residents, who relied heavily on the type of infrastructure provided by the local council. When asked about this, the local councillors in each area said that young adults do not really engage with local council processes, which leaves the council to make plans based on general assumptions. Therefore, although all three environmental surveys showed that the council provided free exercise facilities, the councillors felt their duty to meet the actual physical activity needs of young adults was problematic because young adults mostly do not engage in local political processes.

**5.3.2 Paying for sensation seeking.** It was evident throughout all interviews and focus group sessions that the desire to feel something tangible was an important part of leisure, to the extent that the interviewees were happy to pay money for anything that promised to help them feel positive emotional responses such as enjoyment, fun, happiness, thrill/adventure/adrenalin or a sense of achievement. As I conducted the environmental audit, I could see this attitude also reflected in the artefacts around them—advertising on billboards and the infrastructure in public spaces—which was notably of higher quality in the more expensive places to live than in the poorer.\(^{12}\)

Paying money for something can certainly encourage a young adult to participate in a leisure activity. Participants said they wanted to be equipped physically and psychologically to enjoy their leisure experiences and make the most of them. Many simply wanted to feel competent ‘knowing what I’m doing’ (Alison, RPI13) or at ease and happy with ‘effortless enjoyment . . . where there’s no great pressure on me to perform’ (Lucy, IMPI14).

\(^{12}\) An outline of this is in the environmental survey table in Chapter 6.
Many of the examples of social leisure pursuits given in the focus groups and interviews reflected the importance of a non-competitive and non-threatening social environment for recreation. Participants' descriptions of their favourite physically active leisure were of relaxed environments that helped them feel confident and good about themselves. A few extended this to wanting their choice of leisure pursuit to enhance their cultural capital, that is, purposefully engaging in more book reading, playing social team sports or friendly online computer games, or visiting galleries and cultural centres.

5.3.3 Consumption practices. This section examines the array of goods and services used by participants for their leisure and the interactions between consumption practices, income and geography that serve to enable and hinder participation in physical activity. It incorporates their beliefs about the role that these purchases played in their leisure experiences and draws on the environmental survey to illustrate how lifestyle and leisure are externally driven. Figure 5.5 diagrammatically represents these findings; and reflects the common elements across the study sites.

*Figure 5.5. Aspects related to the consumption practices of young adults.*
Most participants perceived that purchases made for leisure were a necessary part of the leisure experience. Interviewees generally described owning items for leisure and paying for services related to leisure as important to achieving their leisure-related goals. They considered buying, rather than hiring or borrowing music, movies or activity-specific clothing important, regardless of the level of physical activity involved or the level of personal income. Often, people bought ex-hire DVDs or second-hand equipment so they could afford what they wanted.

Participants enumerated the financial costs of their leisure by responding to questions covering:

- the costs of their leisure;
- the role of these purchases for their leisure experience;
- what they would like to purchase in the future;
- the costs involved in their favourite physically active pursuit, the initial outlay and what they would like to purchase in the future for it; and
- the costs involved in their favourite physically sedentary pursuit, the initial outlay and what they would like to purchase in the future for it.

Much of the costs associated with activities were incurred either to set up or to maintain their participation in the activity. The key costs of leisure for participants essentially fall into four categories: goods, services, facilities and transport. Often, a single leisure pursuit would involve several different costs. Table 5.2 shows how this applies to six of the most common leisure pursuits: three active and three sedentary.

Unpacking these expenditures shed light on the complexities of the consumption practices of the interviewees: participation generally incurred a fee for entry or playing, transport, food and/or drink, specialist clothing and/or equipment. For example, playing touch football involves at least four different financial costs: player registration fees of
approximately $100 per season or $10 per game per player, team uniform (typically
colour-coded shirt and shorts), specific touch football shoes (approximately $80–$100)
and transport (usually by car). Another example, going to the cinema, involves transport
and parking costs, usually sharing a meal with friends beforehand and purchasing items
at the candy bar, then a movie ticket, and often a coffee and dessert after the movie.
Nightclubbing involves transport (usually by car or taxi), cover charge, alcoholic drinks,
food, special clothes and, for some people, illicit drugs such as methamphetamine.
Despite many of the interviewees being on a low income, all the components were still
included, but with less expensive options, for example, fast food, going to the movies
on a cheap night, carpooling or public transport or sometimes walking home. Even
when participants considered the additional items to be non-essential to the overall
experience, they still prioritised their inclusion, acknowledging the social benefits
derived from sharing experiences with their friends.
### Table 5.2

_Most Common Active and Sedentary Leisure Pursuits and Associated Requirements_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of activity</th>
<th>Leisure activity</th>
<th>Goods</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Transport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sedentary or low physical activity</td>
<td>General socialising</td>
<td>Food, beverages</td>
<td>Mobile phone, Internet, parking, entry fees</td>
<td>Cafés, restaurants, nightclubs</td>
<td>Motor vehicle, bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music (listening or playing)</td>
<td>Musical equipment</td>
<td>Youth groups</td>
<td>Church youth centres, home</td>
<td>Motor vehicle, parking fees, public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Movies (cinema or home)</td>
<td>DVDs, DVD players</td>
<td>Movie rental &amp; purchasing outlets</td>
<td>Movie cinema, homes, community spaces/halls</td>
<td>Motor vehicle, parking fees, taxi, public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Team sport</td>
<td>Specialist sports equipment, team &amp; activity-specific clothing</td>
<td>Community groups—membership of local sports club (player registration fees)</td>
<td>Recreation/leisure centre (bowling, tennis), weekly playing fee</td>
<td>Motor vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness exercises</td>
<td></td>
<td>Specific clothing—gym clothes, home gym equipment</td>
<td>Fitness instructor, personal trainer</td>
<td>Public exercise stations, fitness centres</td>
<td>Motor vehicle, bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogging/running</td>
<td></td>
<td>Activity-specific clothing, portable music playing device</td>
<td>Athletics coach</td>
<td>Open green spaces, footpaths, shared paths, athletics tracks, playing fields</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
some, it was actually about the newness of the item—buying something new (rather than used ones or hiring or borrowing) was described by a few participants as signalling a new phase and energising them, often providing a much-needed ‘boost . . . like a new chapter’ (Angie, IMPI04) and enabling them to move forward in life. Overall, interviewees felt that purchasing commodities helped them achieve a sense of acceptance, mainly because their transactions enabled their participation in social gatherings, which helped them feel included.

For the young adults in this study there was a natural connection between their financial independence, personal freedom and sensation seeking. The feeling of freedom that came with financial independence featured often in many of their lives. Even if their weekly income was modest, they recounted the special feelings involved when buying new things for themselves or going out to dinner rather than cooking at home, (even if it was simply fast food). Some directly attributed a special feeling to the novelty and financial independence.

Interviewees talked openly about spending significant proportions of their weekly income on disposable items for recreation, especially on alcohol and takeaway food. This may have been because of the financial independence from their parents, or the relative financial freedom that came from not having a mortgage or dependent children to support.

Not only using things, but also the actual act of making the purchase was described as pleasurable (and desirable) in its own right. Shopping was not just a leisure experience, but the act of paying and owning served to validate the participants as independent adults. Buying and owning one’s own equipment can inspire and invigorate an individual. Angie, who was earning less than $150 per week, explained, ‘[it’s] motivation or affirmation of intentions to change’, and qualified her spending rationale,
as did others on a low income, saying ‘I am the sort of person who uses new things if I need the item . . . shrewder when buying what I need rather than opportunistic shopping’ (IMPI04). What she was describing was a purposeful shopping strategy: she expected to gain more value for her money by selecting new items when she could afford them, rather than second-hand ones. Alistair (OMPI12) explained how a purchase for leisure provided inspiration and a kind of personal leverage, almost like a game with himself, noting that he ‘looks forward to using it—keeps the novelty value alive’.

Earning between $600 and $799 per week, he appreciated and sought the \textit{novelty value} of buying things for leisure, as did many others.

Many participants described shopping itself as a leisure experience. Their consumption practices included searching for bargains and comparing products, facilities or services as a recurring aspect, mainly in the outer-metropolitan and inner-metropolitan participant interviews. Geoff described the motivation for his discretionary purchases as tending ‘to be a selfish thing for me’ (OMPI02), an aspect of motivation for individuals—acquiring new items for leisure reinforces a sense of self-worth. Geoff explained that his competitive nature often drove him to stretch his budget as far as he could in order to buy quality equipment and opportunities for leisure, especially when starting a new pursuit. These purchases served to satisfy a number of elements at the same time: his sense of competitiveness, a desire to improve physical skills and physical activity outcomes (e.g., fitness levels). He perceived the act of purchasing as enhancing his leisure experience by providing the motivation to use the item immediately and often. The novelty value of new purchases became an integral aspect of his motivation for physical activity in his free time.

Most perceived owning, rather than hiring or borrowing items, as important for celebrating their financial independence and defining themselves as a functioning adult.
Mary explained that it ‘makes it more enjoyable because earned it for self, spend it on self’ (OMPI09). Indeed, many interviewees had a great affinity with the consumer process involved in purchasing for leisure. They described the process as something that could motivate them to be involved in different leisure pursuits, and whatever the attraction, the ability to shop around and pay less was a key motivating feature for those who wanted to be more involved in leisure yet needed to conserve their money. While shopping, particularly bargain hunting, was a leisure activity in its own right for many, it provided a stronger motivation to participate in leisure activities for those living in the city suburbs than those in the rural area.

5.3.4 Financial strain and engagement in leisure. Many interviewees described how the realities of adult financial commitments interfered with the amount of money they wanted to spend on discretionary purchases for leisure. Whether paying to study, saving for a house or car, or paying for the expenses of running a car, some interviewees explained that these important hallmarks of adult life restricted the amount of money they devoted to their own leisure pursuits, necessitating cheaper options or in some cases opting out of activities to save money. In this respect, the interview data confirmed my expectation that the frequency and cost of payments for leisure pursuits would make a difference to their participation.

For those on lower incomes, spending on discretionary items naturally restricted their participation in some physical activities. While this is a typical scenario for all adults, the flow-on effect for someone starting out who does not have the social or financial support networks to carry them through times of difficulty, can have a detrimental effect on their ability to take charge of their situation. As discussed earlier in relation to Jordan and Eddie’s difficult transitions, maintaining positive social connections is very important.
With many of the participants on low incomes and with mobile lifestyles, the attraction of highly accessible food is an interesting overlay of the way the physical environment contributed to the consumption practices of the interviewees. Both Gin Gin and Beenleigh have 24 hr fast-food outlets. Lacking the infrastructure of the inner-city area of South Brisbane, these 24 hr outlets in the outer suburbs and rural areas fill the gap in food service provision for late-night and early-morning visits. However, such outlets are absent from the South Brisbane area, which instead has a number of fashionable ‘café strips’ in the West End and at the South Bank Parklands as well as the cultural centres (Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland Performing Arts Centre and State Library of Queensland). More restaurants, public bars, nightclubs and late-night mobile food outlets in the South Brisbane area provide ready access to quick and easy food options for city-goers into the early hours of the morning.

5.3.4.1 Paying for a partner. The financial strain of supporting an under- or unemployed partner was a silent and very private stressor mentioned by some rural respondents and one in South Brisbane. Considering the combined effects of their financial and geographical context, the attempts of these rural participants, in particular, to maintain leisure practices in order to remain socially connected placed unsustainable financial burdens on them that could easily affect other aspects of their health. For example, two young rural women were regularly paying for their boyfriends’ mobile phone bills, movie tickets, dining out, fuel costs and so on. Having to drive 50 km each way to do most of the things that young adults want to do to socialise (e.g., go to the cinema, go to nightclubs, dine out at a restaurant, go to the beach, go bowling, go shopping) imposed an additional financial burden. They described how this affected...
their capacity and that of their boyfriends to participate more fully in their preferred leisure opportunities.

Canadian-born Ainslie expressed a similar feeling. While on a working visa, she worked in a local rock-climbing centre in South Brisbane to support both herself and her partner, who was studying at a nearby university. With the high costs of rental properties in the inner-city suburbs a considerable limitation, Ainslie found it difficult to afford the range of health-promoting outdoor adventure activities for the two of them that they were accustomed to back in Canada when her partner was also working. She described her current spending on leisure as needing to be either very cheap or free.

For three young single rural men, the prospect of having to cover the costs of a girlfriend’s share when dating was a daunting one. At 18 and 19 years old, brothers Alexander, James and Sam, shared their concerns about the drain on their finances that having a girlfriend would have on their finances while they were casual employees. They felt that a man should be able to pay for his girlfriend’s expenses when on a date, and so until they had full-time jobs, dating would have to wait. Jim felt a similar strong sense of obligation. An unemployed full-time university student from Beenleigh, Jim spoke about the negative effect of different SEP on a past relationship with a young woman from a wealthy family in Brisbane. They met at a Christian youth event, and although they shared religious beliefs, the economic and social differences eventually proved unsustainable. In his words, she was a ‘rich Ascot girl’ and therefore ‘an expensive girlfriend . . . women in general want security in a guy’ and so he felt a need to show that he was financially secure and able to pay for all of her needs when they went out on dates (Jim, OMPI21). Jim freely acknowledged that having this attitude to financially supporting a partner had its downsides.
5.3.4.2 Structuring leisure pursuits for affordability. Quite a few participants explained how the amount of structure involved in a leisure pursuit made a difference to its affordability and therefore their participation in the activity. Some participants found that planned structured leisure activities required more money than ones with less structure did. Activities with little or no structure tend to be sedentary (unstructured and sedentary pursuits) and are cheaper and therefore more accessible and thus were engaged in frequently (e.g., watching television, social networking sites and internet surfing). Those who played touch football thought of it as a cheap physically active leisure pursuit and, as Simon explained, paying the relatively small amount of money each week to join in a social touch football team helped him achieve his physical activity goals (Simon, RPI07).

5.3.4.3 Too young for financial responsibilities. Alongside the appreciation of their financial independence, participants did not believe that they should have financial responsibilities burden them at this early stage of their adult life. The explanation of 21-year-old Joel encapsulated the general feeling: he felt ‘too young to have financial or time responsibilities of a “mortgage and daily planner”’ and valued the resource of time more than money, as well as friends and having fun (Joel, IMPI16). This attitude to personal finances encouraged them to spend more on discretionary items for leisure.

5.3.4.4 Financial costs of maintaining social connections.

Socialising was the most common, and costly, of all leisure pursuits. Their responses when asked to itemise the costs involved in their favourite regular sedentary and active leisure pursuits showed that the consumables associated with social activities such as dining out and nightclubbing accounted for a large proportion of their income. The expenses involved in a typical night out ‘on the town’ conservatively accounted for up to 20% of the average young adult’s weekly income in this study. This amount did
not include the variable cost of suitable clothing and accessories that contribute to the nightclubbing experience. With all interviewees, even when on a low income, wanting to be social outweighed the cost barrier.

5.3.4.5 Driving them up the wall. The lack of public transport put an additional financial strain on the residents of Gin Gin, which in turn restricted their choices for leisure as well as for other aspects of life. Cr Wayne Honor explained the council’s dilemma regarding providing viable public transport services. Without a critical mass of regular patrons, small rural townships will never be able to justify a public transport network, or the granting of licences for nightclubs or cinemas that would in turn enable a commercial enterprise to compete with those in regional or city areas. Although the need for a car is an accepted part of living in a country town, it constrains the participation of rural residents in many areas, including in active leisure. Without any of the usual concessions for disadvantage, individual residents then absorb the additional costs of transport into their spending on leisure, which in turn constrains their capacity to spend money on other facets of their lives. In what can be seen as a vicious economic cycle, the active leisure needs of rural residents are largely limited to what can be offered free or very cheaply and locally.

Although the rural interviewees talked about personal transport costs draining their money for leisure, their inner-metropolitan counterparts appreciated the ease of their public and active transport opportunities, which freed up more of their income to spend on leisure activities (e.g., equipment, clothing, entertainment and travel). One of the biggest differences in expenditure between the study sites was in the area of recreational travel and the use of money to buy an experience.

5.3.4.6 Paying to be motivated. For some of the young men (more than the young women), the initial motivation to participate in physically active leisure came
from watching sports on television or preparing for a sporting event such as a triathlon, fun run or the football season. For these participants, paying to watch sport or enter an event meant a type of commitment to the activity, and therefore was an external motivation to be prepared and achieve the best they could, or emulate the performances seen on the screen.

Investment in event or activity paraphernalia, such as sporting magazines, signalled a further commitment that participants said helped motivate them to continue. Striking examples of this came from young men in the outer-metropolitan and inner-metropolitan areas, rather than the rural area. For example, Geoff (OMPI02) described his use of event participation as a focus for his physical activity, citing the entry fees and equipment needed for triathlon, futsal, golf, touch football, indoor cricket and particularly motorbike racing as ways to satisfy his competitiveness and need for continual self-improvement. Quite a few interviewees discussed how paying for gym membership motivated them to be more active. For most of these respondents, especially the young women, they also wanted to have someone else to go with. As with a few others, Geoff described the act of purchasing quality new equipment for his leisure as a personal leisure pursuit in and of itself. He said the immediate and frequent use of the new item(s) enhanced the overall experience.

However, investing money in things with the intention of being more physically active does not always work, as 24-year-old Shelley (IMPI03) exemplifies. She recounted the purchase of a bicycle for recreation and active transport in the recent past. However, Shelley barely used the bike, despite her good intentions at the time, and in her terms, it was a true ‘aspirational purchase’—something purchased with the intent that it will help change behaviour. This lack of use was also despite the short journeys she would have on the relatively well-positioned cycling options of South Brisbane.
Given that both she and her younger brother, Russell (IMPI02), described the effort involved in being physically active as too great, it is not surprising that such a purchase did not end up enabling her to keep cycling. She explained how the actual regular practice of riding a bike proved ‘way too hard’ (Shelley IMPI03) and was in stark contrast to the gentler and social activities that she found easier and much more enjoyable.

5.4 Summary

One of the central findings regarding the cultural and economic influences on participants relates to their understanding of leisure time as being a time in which to rest and recover from the rigours of work or study. Because relaxation was the main purpose of leisure, respondents sought to share the experience and enjoy the company of friends and family. With only a few exceptions, participants preferred to be sedentary and to socialise in their spare time. Largely, they did not prefer to be physically active. For most, being active equated to exercise and entailed unwanted effort and discomfort, organisation and time constraints. In general, they were seeking emotional highs through enjoyable social interactions and experiences. When participants did mention a positive view on physical activity, it was typically by those in their mid-20s in relation to the obligation that they had begun to feel to maintain their mental or physical health.

A combination of inculcation during childhood and adolescence and neighbourhood characteristics shapes the leisure enjoyed by young adults. For both sedentary and active leisure, the combination of upbringing, social relationships and immediate environment played clear roles in the development of the current practices of participants.

Participants viewed their income and the leisure-related goods, services and facilities around them as features of everyday life that helped them achieve their
specific leisure objectives. The proportion of their income they devoted to spending on leisure related to their value systems. Because of the low incomes of most interviewees, affordability was a main barrier to their full involvement in leisure of any kind. Participants described using many strategies to be able to afford the commodities they wanted. They explained the costs in terms of quality and enjoyment: quality items provide quality experiences and devoting time to share with friends and family. Overall, paying for aspects of the leisure experience equated to having quality experiences. They were paying, in short, for sociability and the sensations associated with the leisure pursuit—relaxation, novelty, excitement or comfort.
Chapter 6: Individual-Level Factors Associated with the Leisure Time Physical Activity of Young Adults

Whereas the previous chapter considers participants’ cultural understanding related to LTPA and their consumer behaviours with respect to leisure, this chapter focuses on a number of socio-demographic, socio-economic, psychosocial and environmental factors that are associated with the LTPA of participants in the research. The themes of geographic mobility, gender, prioritisation of health, self-confidence, time pressure, personal safety, sense of control, motivation and neighbourhood characteristics emerge from this and are used to organise the findings and mini case studies.

6.1 Socio-Demographic Factors Associated with Leisure Time Physical Activity

Analysis of interview transcripts and closed-question responses as well as the environmental surveys conducted during fieldwork shows the relevance of overarching factors such as employment and education. For the most part, differences between the leisure experiences of participants from the three study sites are attributable to the location and population size that shapes the variety and accessibility of opportunities for leisure and physical activity. As shown in the previous chapter, proximity to a larger city provided access to a wider variety of opportunities for participants. There are notable differences in how and how much respondents from each study site used the free public facilities in their area.

Despite free outdoor recreation facilities, such as shared paths, sports courts and parks in open public spaces and exercise stations in public parks, being available in all areas, rural and outer-metropolitan participants reported rarely using them, preferring
instead to drive to other locations, such as a beach half an hour away, in order to use the free facilities there. However, having access to infrastructure that enables free access to facilities for physical activity does not mean people use it. Of all the free facilities, shared paths and cycle paths were the most used by participants for walking, running and cycling.

Given the small size of the rural site, much of the discussion with rural key informants centred on the socio-demographics of their community. Two key informants in Gin Gin described a sudden change in population dynamics in the early 1990s, which provides a useful backdrop to some of the socio-demographic story of Gin Gin.

6.1.1 Being geographically mobile: Education, culture and leisure. Answers to the closed interview questions highlight differences in education levels and in mobility as two features associated with general perspectives on healthy living. More than twice as many young adults in the inner-metropolitan area were in tertiary study than in the other study sites, and many of them had moved there from other areas to study (overseas, regional Queensland and interstate). They brought differently informed health practices. Although the possible effect of such differences on the LTPA of these participants was not measured in this research, the reflections of some of the participants indicate the benefits of broad exposure to various ways of being and doing in life. Having moved away from home to live and perhaps study in an inner-city area most came with a willingness to explore new places, often taking financial and cultural risks more openly than participants from the other study sites or those born and raised in South Brisbane. Six respondents exemplify this phenomenon: Irish-born Sean, regional Queenslander Abi, Colombian-born Claudia, Canadian-born Ainslie, Italian-born Angelo and Canberra-born Tom, all of whom relocated as young adults to live in the South Brisbane area for study or work. They voiced their appreciation of the vibrant
lifestyle offered in the city area and the close proximity of amenities that made walking and cycling to work, study or recreational activities easy. In contrast to those born and raised in the same inner-city area, they made frequent and regular use of their immediate surroundings—in particular, walking, running and cycling for transport and exercise.

6.1.2 **Gender differences.** Young women and men reported participating in many of the same leisure pursuits. Most often, these involved food and drink, music and occasionally team sports, walking, running and going to the gym. However, the focus groups identified a few activities as being more popular with either females or males in their areas.

The most gendered preferences discussed were in the rural area focus groups (see Appendix D: Table D.1). According to these groups, many young women prefer sedentary leisure such as watching movies, karaoke, dining out and generally socialising with other women, whereas young men prefer gaming, paintball, driving and spending time with other men.

However, the standout gender issue regarding participation is the personal comfort and safety of young women in the urban areas. Female interviewees mentioned fears for their physical safety and emotional security and that they tried to avoid intimidating environments such as rowdy public bars, nightclubs or dark outdoor areas when wanting to dance, run or walk after dark.

An emotive outburst from one of the younger women during a focus group in Beenleigh highlighted a deep-seated tension between a sense of personal safety, personal values and perceptions of socially acceptable behaviour. Discussing the pub scene in Beenleigh, she described how the ‘prostitute-like behaviour’ of young women generally in the taverns put her off socialising there in the evenings (OMFG02). Instead,
she preferred the safety of her church group gatherings. She voiced her clear condemnation of taverns and pubs in Beenleigh, linking fears for the moral safety of others to a restriction of her own access to places for social activities. Although not explored in depth in this thesis, photographs of the facades and billboards of these bars and taverns taken for the environmental survey reflect something of her comment and inference (see Figure 6.4).

6.1.3 Like-minded groups: Helping or hindering physical activity? All data sources contain evidence of the importance of organised social groups, such as church youth groups and families, suggesting that young adults use these organisational structures for support as they transition from school-aged teenagers to fully functioning adults. These like-minded groups provide a sense of belonging and organisation that gives them the emotional and tangible assistance they seek for resources and guidance.

Through their natural focus on supporting spiritual guidance, the church youth groups in Beenleigh and Gin Gin provided evidence of an underutilised opportunity for inclusive physical activity. With the exception of the sporty family, whose active parents engineered the social structure and modelled the physical activity practices, the other social groups occurring in this research (siblings and the faith-based focus groups) seemed to facilitate a sense of community solely through sedentary mechanisms. The fact that these occasions or settings required little or no physical activity presented an opportunity for its inclusion.

The Gin Gin church youth group described the flat organisational structure and ready access to their church facilities as particularly important for their social gatherings as well as their church activities. Among other aspects, it provided them with a mechanism for sustaining their friendships and musical interests. Members of this group organised regular gatherings for music rehearsals, watching movies and sharing meals.
In addition to this social network, the venue itself gave members access to a well-equipped kitchen, indoor eating area, and data projector and screen to show movies in a cinema-style set-up. Similarly, the Beenleigh youth group enjoyed a relaxed relationship with their pastor and met on a regular basis in his family home. The gatherings tended to include communal meals that helped to provide a focal point for the ensuing bible studies and discussions.

With both of the faith-based groups, the role of two young church leaders was critical. Their quiet and unassuming ways offered openings for the members of each group to be involved and to utilise the facilities as needed. Born and raised in Gin Gin, Michael’s local knowledge combined with his youthfulness and his work as chaplain at the local high school helped him to build trust among the young people in the community. His air of comfort and self-assurance fostered respect among the youth group and the wider community. Similarly, the young adults in his congregation held the Beenleigh church leader (who arranged the focus group conducted there) in high regard.

6.1.4 When life shifts up a gear. Significant transitions for this age group include school-to-further study, or school-to-work, school-to-trade and work, or school-to-unemployment. The transition and subsequent adjustment from being a full-time student to being something quite different can be a disruption that limits the amount and quality of leisure for the individual as well as the leisure shared with others. In comparison with the demands of study or casual or part-time employment, the nature of full-time employment took some conscious adjustment for participants. A number of them explained how the shift to full-time work sapped their energy, especially for active forms of leisure. In addition to full-time work, the time and energy to develop relationships with new people required adjustment to their schedules and influenced the
types and amounts of leisure they had. Whilst only a few could explain the angst they felt about adjusting to adulthood, most of the interviewees inferred that learning how to manage the demands of adult life, including their social, emotional, physical and mental health, was a background issue that took time and energy for them.

6.1.5 The age of self-discovery. There was a noticeable difference in the level of awareness and corresponding action for physical activity for personal health outcomes expressed by those aged 25–30 years compared with the younger subgroup. Perhaps sensing that they were going through of an ‘age of discovery’, interviewees aged between 18 and 24 years described how they were establishing their own adult identity through experiences of work, study and socialising, and how they were coming to understand where and how they fit into the adult realm. Participants with a few more years of life experience expressed their understanding of their own leisure practices and explained their physical activity behaviours with more complexity than those a few years younger. When reflecting on how their understanding of leisure and physical activity had developed during their lives, Tom and Nicki articulated their discovery of the importance of exercise during their mid-20s. They acknowledged that they valued their leisure time more as they grew older, taking it for granted less than they did when they were younger.

Taking a broader view, Nicki described her combination of walking and buses to work in the city centre as a leisure pursuit because she found it relaxing. She explained how she took the bus to work but walked home via a dedicated pedestrian boardwalk by the river and then took the ferry the rest of the way home. She described it as pleasant and relaxing as well as a good opportunity to have some regular exercise. She reported feeling great after exercising in this way and acknowledged that the health benefits were both mental and physical.
6.2 Socio-Economic Factors Associated with Leisure Time Physical Activity: Life in the Off-Peak Lane

In the interview, I asked all participants to elaborate on their financial situation, including spending priorities and strategies for affording leisure pursuits. As shown in Chapter 4, many of the respondents earned less than $400 per week, living below the poverty line ($395 for the 2008 September quarter; Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2009). Those on low incomes reported using a number of common strategies to ensure their participation in both sedentary and active leisure. One of the most common strategies to save money was to share accommodation with immediate or extended family members, or in a group house. Rarely did they live alone, and when they did, it was because of short-term necessity rather than personal preference. Only two of the 61 interviewees were living alone—one in emergency housing and the other about to move in with his new girlfriend. The next section discusses other strategies used by participants on a low budget to continue spending on leisure and pursuing novelty and sensation seeking.

6.2.1 Cheap and cheerful. As many participants liked to socialise at venues where they had to pay to enter or participate, those on lower incomes looked for ways to minimise the costs as creatively and practically as they could. While living a long distance from the city had its benefits, Jason described the sort of forced frugality that living in a rural town necessitated:

I think you probably, something about the way that I’ve been brought up in a place like this is that you don’t spend a lot of money going to other places, so you can spend a lot of your leisure time just doing things around home, doing things that don’t cost heaps of money. (Jason, RPI05)
Jason went on to explain how this had encouraged his now favourite leisure pursuit of tinkering, and that he continued this way of economical living as an adult both at home in Gin Gin and when he stayed in larger towns and big cities.

The ‘save then splurge’ method of affording leisure experiences and items, as explained by Tilly (RPI17), was a particular way of feeling the joy of giving to oneself and others while on a low income and not living close to immediate family:

Tilly: It’s hard because, like it always depended, but when I’d come down and visit for like two weeks, I’d spend a lot of money on leisure doing all the things I wanted to do, ’cos I missed out on it up there, you do spend a fair bit, ’cos you want to do fun things . . . [like going to] the movies and bowling and laser tag and you go out and like go shopping and yeh . . . really like a whole day would probably cost around $3–400 I guess . . . yeh, ’cos I also like [to] shout my family and stuff, so it did cost me a fair bit, but it was worth it, so, I really don’t mind . . . yeh, [it included] food and like pretty like lunch and dinner ’cos we’d spend like the whole day in [town] and just do whatever we wanted.

Interviewer: And how frequently would that have happened?

Tilly: Um, when I was down here we were coming into Bundy, we did leisure like we did really fun days three times and other days we’d just come in and sort of look around and we just sort of walk around and like just have sort of family time and not spend that much money, just maybe have lunch and stuff there, only get the stuff we needed and then go home

Interviewer: So pretty sporadic, but when you’re in town and had the money, would spend up fairly big and would do what you wanted to do?

Tilly: Yep, yep. (Tilly, RPI17)
Tilly’s pattern of spending shows the pleasure she gained from spending both time and money on others, which many participants either described or alluded to. These recurrent themes of spending on leisure and social connectivity point directly to their combined importance for the participants’ feelings of growing independence and their overall psychological health.

Not identified by interviewees from other areas, growing up rurally had an additional impact on the opportunities for leisure. Like others from Gin Gin, Tilly described how living on a rural property just outside of town but without town electricity to power electronic gaming equipment or television affected her leisure activities:

Interviewer: When you say it was ‘an experience’, what do you mean?
Tilly: Um, it’s different because you don’t always have power there, so you have to find other things to do, um, like with solar power you can run computers and stuff, but you can’t all the time because of cloudiness and stuff. So, therefore, you have to go out and make fun for yourself, you don’t just rely on like computers or video games to do fun stuff, you actually have to go swimming in the dam or play tiggy or do something active.

Interviewer: So is that what you remember doing as a child, playing tiggy?
Tilly: Yeh, a lot of that, we used to make our own fun. (Tilly, RPI17)

Rather than resenting the rustic environment of her childhood, Tilly attributed to her upbringing her ability to entertain herself when she lacked money for paid activities. Unemployed at the time of interview, this was an important part of her psychological toolkit for overall wellbeing. In terms of her LTPA as an adult, however, she described being mostly inactive except for some tenpin bowling with family.
Time and Transitions

Living close to work and study naturally frees up personal resources for other purposes, including leisure. This automatically disadvantaged those in the rural area, who, already on lower incomes than their urban counterparts, were compelled to maintain a car and drive to work and recreation.

Most participants found it difficult to estimate the proportion of their leisure spending for active or sedentary leisure, and found it easier instead to describe the costs of specific items, events, services and so on. From this information, I estimated they spent between 50% and 90% of their weekly income on leisure, with much of it going to sedentary pursuits.

6.2.2 Prioritising needs and wants. While nightclub dancing in particular may be considered a fun and benign form of physically active leisure, it is not without its dark side. The risks, as explained by a few participants, are integrally linked with the mix of alcohol and other drugs, some planned and others not, consumed as a part of nightclubbing.

As a leisure pursuit, mostly female participants mentioned dancing and dancing lessons or other semi-organised opportunities to dance featured only minimally among the interviewees. However, nightclub dancing was quite popular among both women and men. Quite a few nominated social dancing at nightclubs as one of their regular leisure time physical activities, and a few from both urban areas described their specific approaches to having a good time on a low budget. The cover charge and drinks at nightclubs are expensive for many young people, and two participants in particular explained how they conserved their money by not needing to buy alcohol at the clubs. They described the common practice of consuming alcohol and illicit drugs (usually methamphetamines) at home, before going to the club to enhance their social and physical experience. They felt they achieved the same ‘buzz’ but at a fraction of the
cost. One such participant discussed the interplay between socialisation and doing something illegal (but not perceived to be too dangerous) as being more affordable and fun than drinking volumes of alcohol alone. She explained how the combination of friends, alcohol and illegal drugs enabled her and her friends to maximise their enjoyment while minimising the cost of the weekend ritual of nightclubbing and limiting the risk of harm. She rationalised the $15 cost of a street drug and the energising effect she and her friends obtained from it, saying it offset the higher costs of alcoholic drinks charged at nightclubs. Street drugs are generally cheaper than alcohol and, as these interviewees reported, are readily available. Other respondents explained the general strategy of reducing the cost of a night out by ‘preloading’ together at the home of one of the group and then sharing a taxi ride or catching the train to one or more nightclubs in the city. As these participants explained, the drugs they used were less detectable to taxi drivers and nightclub security staff than alcohol because they produced no odour. To help reduce the risk of drink spiking, they took their own water bottles when they went out at night. These strategies assisted participants to have an affordable and fun social occasion in relative safety.

Perceiving themselves to be safe was an important aspect of their leisure experiences. Participants who frequented nightclubs said they felt physically safer in venues with a high cover charge. More young women mentioned this perception of safety, including Colombian-born Claudia (IMPI07), who loved dancing regularly in Brisbane City. Despite earning less than $400 per week, Claudia believed that a higher cover charge equated to a safer experience in a nightclub, and so justified the expense. Despite a recent disturbing experience involving drink spiking and rape of a close friend while nightclubbing in the city centre, she remained undeterred in her determination to dance in the city nightclubs and live her life to the fullest while she was young. The
debt she carried as an international student on a government loan from her home country meant that she had limited spare cash, but she valued her dancing and socialising so much that she was willing to dedicate some money each week to enjoying life as a young and vibrant woman. That the rape incident involving her friend happened at a nightclub with a low cover charge served to confirm Claudia’s belief in her risk mitigation strategy.

While it was common for participants to prioritise their needs and wants for leisure on being able to satisfying their immediate needs or wants, they also described the importance of feeling self-confident and being in the company of other people who accepted them.

6.3 Psychosocial Factors Associated with Leisure Time Physical Activity

Interviewees said that their feelings of self-confidence and competence strongly influenced their participation in active forms of leisure. This was particularly so when they were establishing intimate relationships while juggling the new demands of a career and/or study. As they became more self-assured and able to manage their own time, relationships and money, their understanding of their health priorities also seemed to develop, and with that, an appreciation of being more physically active for their own health.
6.3.1 Self-confidence. Interviewees described two aspects to feeling self-confident enough to participate in active forms of leisure: feeling physically competent in the skills required of the activity; and whether or not they would know other people in the group enough to feel socially accepted. When these criteria were met, the combined effect, they said, were greater enjoyment because they felt safe and in control of what happened.

6.3.2 Having a leisure buddy. Most interviewees mentioned the importance of a companion during spare time activities. The confidence boost and then motivation this other person provided was as important to them for participation as being competent in the skills or being able to pay for the leisure activity itself.

Those who mentioned lacking the confidence to do something individually or join an activity-based club usually cited the lack of a friend or more experienced person with whom to do it as their reason for not participating. A few respondents said they felt indecisive or generally lacked self-confidence. Participants in the rural area were more likely to mention a lack of friends as the main barrier than their urban peers. For example, Jordan (RPI02) who was new to Gin Gin, explained how not having friends his own age discourages him from involvement in different pursuits. Another was 18-year-old Leith (RPI14), who had recently left school and all of the structured social opportunities school provided. Leith said having no one to do things with more generally was the main obstacle to her participation in physical activities. These social barriers to participation echoed comments made by other interviewees and in the focus groups about the importance of having peers with which to share their spare time as well as their family and other friends of different ages. Companions helped to bolster the confidence of the young adults as they negotiated different contexts or new leisure activities.
6.3.3 Feeling time pressure: Effects on satisfaction and confidence. Overall, respondents felt satisfied with their current leisure activities, but explained that the demands of adjusting to new and often busy schedules influenced their ability, time or energy to try a new pursuit in their available time. I asked them to indicate their intentions for change to their leisure, including whether they planned to try new pursuits, and their level of confidence to do so. Figures 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 show the levels of satisfaction with amounts of time and confidence to try new activities for their leisure. I asked them the following questions:\textsuperscript{13}

- Would you like to do more of anything or something new?
- Would you like to change any of your current leisure pursuits, and do you feel confident in your ability to try new or different leisure pursuits?
- Do you feel you have enough leisure time?

Given an opportunity, most rural and approximately two thirds of metropolitan participants said that they would change their leisure activities if they could. While many said they would try new leisure activities and felt confident to do so, rural participants felt less satisfied with the amount of time they had for leisure and cited \textit{travel time} as the main reason.

\textsuperscript{13} Interviewees were also asked to give examples and explanations for their responses.
Figure 6.1. Rural perceptions of time for leisure and intentions and confidence for change to leisure activities (proportion).
Figure 6.2. Outer-metropolitan perceptions of time for leisure and intentions and confidence for change to leisure activities (proportion).
Figure 6.3. Inner-metropolitan perceptions of time for leisure and intentions and confidence for change to leisure activities (proportion).

With regard to confidence levels, the experiences of two women from Beenleigh stand out. Although difficult situations during adolescence still affected some participants, Alice and Rachel drew strength and confidence from having overcome their difficult pasts and their currently stable social situations (Rachel OMPI20; Alice OMPI17). Hoping to start a family soon, both Alice and her husband, Chris (also a focus group and individual participant in his late 20s), said they had adequate time for
leisure and a physical activity focus (Chris, OMPI18). Alice had quite a different childhood from that of her husband, and she found solace and helpful distraction in organised sport during her unhappy and unsettled youth. She described using the time dedicated to organised sport and the physical nature of the sporting activities to escape the unhappiness of her childhood and build her self-confidence and social support networks. With the help of her physically active teenage friend and now husband, Chris (her leisure buddy), Alice continued her participation in regular Tae Kwon Do, walking, jogging and time with a personal trainer in the local gym to keep fit and healthy.

By contrast, 18-year-old Rachel had been living on her own and on a very low income for nearly 12 months. She had moved around with family since her youth and enjoyed riding dirt bikes (motorcross bikes) for recreation. A falling out with her parents led her to move out of home at the age of 16 and rely on a local community youth service for social and living support. During her interview, she explained how her strong connections with Christianity and in particular with the Baptist Church in Beenleigh kept her stable throughout this turbulent time. In a poignant moment during the interview, Rachel described drawing emotional strength from the spiritual relationship she shared with her recently deceased grandmother. Estranged from her immediate family and having just turned 18, she felt that this relationship helped her to carry on alone in her life.

An extension of the emotional strength drawn from close emotional and spiritual relationships is the security and confidence participants such as Rachel gained from feeling connected to a religious community. This was shared by others in the outer-metropolitan and rural areas but not reported in the inner-metropolitan study site. A few mentioned the role of non-age-specific church outreach opportunities such as mission work and community visits in helping them feel more confident. They discussed how
the act of going out into the community boosted their sense of connection with others
and helped them to feel good about themselves.

6.3.4 The importance of feeling safe and in control. While the attraction of
some leisure pursuits was the sheer excitement or adrenalin buzz associated with the
activity, a few participants said they were sometimes inhibited by fear of one kind or
another—their fear of injury or death, or family disapproval—and sometimes by their
own reluctance to relinquish control. Sometimes the fear of an injury would disrupt a
particular training regime (as was the case for Max, RPI03, in his elite amateur athletics
and for Elias, OMP113, in his semi-professional wrestling). The fear of not having
ultimate individual control in an activity prevented Ainslie from trying skydiving
(IMPI20). A few international students from Asian countries mentioned the fear of
family disapproval as their reason for limiting the adventurous options for their LTPA.
Axel, a young Taiwanese man living in South Brisbane, was very conscious of what his
parents and girlfriend back home would say if he told them, he wanted to try an activity
like surfing. Axel said he ‘wouldn’t want to be too selfish if they didn’t really want me
to do it’ (IMPI17), despite saying that he felt confident to try new leisure pursuits and
that he would like to try skydiving, scuba diving—‘something a little dangerous . . .
exciting’. His desire for personal challenge and overcoming fear seemed to be at odds
with the cultural expectations of his upbringing. Axel’s dilemma highlights some of the
tensions between culture, individual preferences and personal confidence when there are
close family ties involved.

6.3.5 Concerns for personal safety while exercising out-of-doors. Some
young women linked their non-participation in outdoor physical activities, notably
walking and jogging, to not feeling physically safe when exercising out-of-doors in the
evenings. Linked mainly to a combination of personal perceptions about aesthetics and
safety related to neighbourhood characteristics and the natural environment, the main examples given related to inadequate street lighting in a low SEP area in the urban suburbs during the shorter winter days. Nicki (IMPI19) felt physically safer and psychologically more at ease when walking in ‘nicer looking areas, for example, by the river on the boardwalk’. However, Kerrie (OMPI03) would not run after work in winter because she felt unsafe alone outside in her outer-metropolitan suburb after dark. Representing this outer-metropolitan area, Cr Hackwood explained that the design of the suburban streetscape is inclusive of fixed lighting generally only on one side of the street, as noted in the environmental surveys, and that streetlights are meant to provide a subtle rather than a strong light. This type and density of street lighting did not give people like Kerrie the confidence to exercise outside after dark.

Other comments resonated with different but complimentary neighbourhood characteristics, which showed variation in the quality and quantity of footpath and street lighting depending on the SEP of the neighbourhood and the age of the suburbs. The parks and gardens where people would exercise for free varied in a similar way, as did shared paths for cycling, walking and jogging, and the associated fitness exercise stations dotted along some of these paths in each study site. The aesthetics and quality of free infrastructure for leisure improves the closer the suburb is to Brisbane City. This highlights the combined effect of the built environment and related planning policy on physical activity environment and behaviour, particularly regarding aesthetics and enjoyment, personal safety and efficient use of time.

6.3.6 A sinister sleaze factor. When discussing reasons why they did not participate in physically active forms of leisure, a few women from each area commented on aspects of their physical and social environment that influenced their feelings of personal physical and psychological safety. Revealing an undercurrent of
anxiety about their own safety, they discussed the types of people and places that discouraged them from participating freely in nightclub dancing, a common physical activity among the young women interviewed. Men in the local clubs and public bars and the prevailing sleaziness that deters female clientele explicitly linked their perceptions of safety to the consumption of alcohol. This happened despite the efforts by the owners of venues in the rural and outer-metropolitan areas to make them more family and female friendly.

Susan explained that the only public venues in Gin Gin in which to socialise of an evening are the local pubs. In her experience, these pubs were patronised by older people, the most intimidating of whom were the ‘heavy drinkers and dirty old men’ (Susan, RPI12). In an effort to avoid these patrons and to be with more young adults, Susan and her friends opted to drive the 50 km into Bundaberg to access venues when going out at night that offered experiences that were more convivial. Of note were venues such as nightclubs and ‘real’ restaurants. They did this despite the associated financial and time costs.

Paradoxically, the local Bundaberg newspaper often reports on the heavy drinking and physical violence nightclubs in Bundaberg, renowned for their rough clientele. This highlights the very personal perceptions of the young women with regard to what they already knew, experienced and wanted in their hometown and elsewhere.

Eighteen-year-old Lottie felt similarly uncomfortable and unsafe going out during the evenings in Beenleigh because of the ‘feral’ older men and the influence that gambling and alcohol had on the behaviour of pub patrons. In her words, the presence of ‘Beenleigh Bogans’ as the main reason she did not feel safe to go out in her own suburb in the evenings (Lottie, OMPI16). Confronting stories such as these highlight the
vulnerability felt by a number of young women in their own neighbourhood that impedes their full participation in active forms of leisure. Like Claudia (whose friend recently reported being assaulted after having her drink spiked at a Brisbane City nightclub), some women were undeterred, and preferred to take precautions to mitigate the risks, while others seemed to ignore the risks and participate fully regardless.

Alison had a different perspective on personal safety (RPI13). Having a deeply religious upbringing and being a non-drinker, Alison linked her personal safety very closely to her faith-based social network and acknowledged the importance for her of safe or appropriate types of people with which to socialise. She noted feeling ‘relatively safe in Gin Gin [but] there is a bit of drinking [although] not really harder drugs [and] you need to hang out with the right kind of people’ (Alison, RPI13). Consequently, this meant that Alison did not visit any pubs or clubs.

A couple of interview participants from theBeenleigh church focus group described feeling intimidated by the character of the nightlife in Beenleigh. They expressed their strong dislike of the rough patrons of the taverns in Beenleigh. The focus group shared their views on the culture of drinking, drug taking, casual sex and young or unplanned parenthood that in their minds characterised the ‘typical’ Beenleigh resident (OMFG02). Chris, who at 29 years old was one of the senior members of this group, later offered his explanation for their pointed comments, saying that some of the group had a very conservative narrow upbringing (OMPI18).

The billboards outside the various Beenleigh taverns shown in Figure 6.4 are indicative of the focused marketing of alcohol, gambling and lengthy trading hours of the public bars in the area. In particular, the sexually explicit style of entertainment advertised by the Beenleigh Tavern and the Sundowner Hotel (bikini girls and promo
girls) epitomises the ‘sleaze factor’ the young women were referring to when they discussed feeling uncomfortable and unsafe in the clubs and pubs in the local areas.
Figure 6.4. Long opening hours, style of entertainment, and the focus on gambling, cheap meals, drinking and live music of the public bars and taverns in outer-metropolitan Beenleigh.

6.3.7 Seeking personal fulfilment through leisure pursuits. In the search for fulfilling leisure pursuits, some participants sought out options they considered not to be mainstream or that provided physical challenges. As well as being enjoyable and active, simply trying different activities helped them feel in control of their lives. Max explained this exploration of opportunities, ‘I don’t like getting stuck in the one thing, like joining a club’ (RPI03), and said that indecisiveness could then become a barrier to trying new things. Rather than simply continuing the recreational interests he pursued as a teen, Max looked for activities in which he did not feel limited by an organisation and through which he could express himself. His concerns about stagnating were echoed by
other interviewees who were looking to either fill gaps or round out their life experiences while still young. Some described being in this stage of life and not wanting the restrictions of the rules of a club or system as their main barrier to active forms of leisure. A few described how it was easily overcome with screen-based options or simply ‘hanging out’ with friends.

6.3.8 Having the motivation to move rather than just having a good time.

Whether it was having a level of interest or energy to be involved in local civic engagement or to do more than just commute to work every day, motivation is a theme that permeates the interview data of participants and key informants. The motivation to have an enjoyable time and socialise was higher than the motivation to be physically active, especially for those aged between 18 and 24 years. Participants mentioned feeling motivated by their own values, by advertising or by other people.

6.3.9 Individual differences and the motivation to be physically active.

When asked what motivated them to be physically active, participants sometimes described being either self-motivated or more motivated by other people. Those who were self-motivated described being happy to be active of their own accord and referred to the sensations of adrenalin, fun, excitement and increasing competence as spurring them on. However, the majority said that it was important for them to know others in the activity before they would participate, and in this way, were encouraged by the social aspects of participating. This tendency for others to motivate them was described more frequently in the 18–24-year-old age group, regardless of study site or gender. This age group expressed their preference for very tangible aspects, such as having ‘other people to do (activities) with . . . seeing others participating’ (Roland, RPI19); wanting to be involved with ‘others with prior experience’ (Ainslie, IMPI20); and ‘recommendations; someone to do it with’ (Leith, RPI14).
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For 28-year-old Tom, the motivation to be active came from a deep sense of personal pride and a need to impress those in his immediate circle and to prove other people wrong:

Nowadays—well, I’ve always been um pretty keen on proving people wrong . . . ’Cos I used to have a really big thing. If someone said I couldn’t do it, even if I couldn’t, I’d still give it a go. And that’s something that I always have pride in myself on. But yeah the motivation, it would just have to come from me. Like I’d really want to have to want to do it. I’m not motivated now by like awards or anything like that, so if I made the decision to do it I would do and yeah, the fear would be there that you wouldn’t be any good and you wouldn’t pick it up straight away, but um, if I made the decision to do it then I would go out and do it . . .

So definitely motivated and I’m motivated by the immediate people around me—my close friends, you know my loved ones . . . you know if I can they’re proud of me, then obviously that will carry a lot and that will encourage me to sort of, you know, go further and things like that. So yeah, probably myself and my immediate family and support group. (Tom, IMPI09)

Although Tom considered himself more internally motivated, he still linked his sense of personal pride to being his best when others were around as well as proving other people wrong. This thinking encouraged him to be physically active in his free time (in order to look as trim as he could) and he perceived it as an important psychological advantage for him. When discussing their interest in trying new physically active leisure pursuits, a few of the older interviewees shared the support of being in a stable personal relationship. For example, married couple Alice and Chris (OMPI17 and OMPI18) met as older teenagers while playing team sports and continued
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with tae kwon do, gym activities and walking. Tom (IMPI09) said he felt more open to new activities than when he was single and this encouraged him to participate in a greater range of physical activities, including those that he could do with his partner.

A few of the respondents described an internal motivation to be active. They referred to aspects such as ‘personal challenge . . . overcoming fears’ (Axel, IMPI17) and ‘if learning is involved . . . if it will be beneficial for [my] self-development’ (Sean, IMPI06).

Despite the drawbacks of ‘getting stuck in the one thing [like] joining a club’ (Max, RPI03), joining classes or organised groups (rather than a club or association) was an attractive opportunity for many participants. This was especially so if they felt that they could learn new or specific skills, and even continue skill development from their youth, as mentioned by Katie about her dance classes (IMPI15).

With regard to trying a new leisure pursuit, many young adults said they were more willing if a friend or family member encouraged them. While participants often described this encouragement as ‘peer pressure’, in many cases, it served to counteract a tendency to remain within the comfort zone of a known activity. For 19-year-old Geoff, his friends and family provided the impetus to contemplate new leisure options, as he admitted to relying on tried and tested options: ‘I’m not really interested (in trying something new for leisure); the old ones are easier’ (Geoff, IMPI02). Overall, the internal motivation underpinned by their perceptions of the inherent benefits of some leisure interests complemented this external motivation to try new leisure pursuits or to be physically active in leisure.

Phil, a 28-year-old full-time office worker and part-time university student, described his motivations for leisure as driving him both internally and externally. Happy to do things on his own, and ‘having always been self-motivated’, Phil explained
an aspect of the dual nature of motivation also expressed by other interviewees—while he was motivated by other people, he was also partially influenced by sales and advertising promotions—'depending on what it is' (Phil, IMPI01).

When Joel commented on the type of person he was and how this affected his social interaction, he provided a window into the role that personality and social connections play in choices for leisure: ‘I’m a receptive person, not an initiator, happy to be at home’ (Joel, IMPI16). In something of a contradiction, he also explained his preference to be outside and active. Joel described how he was physically active: he cycled to explore his local area as well as to travel to work or to the ferry, ran for exercise, and walked by the river a few times a week ‘to clear [my] head’. His sedentary leisure included spending time with his girlfriend dining out or visiting the art gallery; going to the pub for meals and play pool with friends; going to the cinema and reading books. His response highlights an important consideration—the level of social interaction in leisure pursuits depends on the individual’s personality and may relate to whether they are attracted to physically active forms of leisure or not.

For the most part, though, young adults across all three study sites said they were encouraged to be active by other people they knew (e.g., in their circle of friends or family) as well as by the prospect of meeting others of a similar age and interests. However, some of the young women described a general preference for women-only leisure activities and felt more comfortable exercising in a women’s only situation, usually a fitness centre or gymnasium that had a women’s only weights room. They felt less intimidated and more comfortable in environments such as this. Attending women-only gyms also meant that they could go with their middle-aged mothers, who were even more at ease when exercising in a space free of males. A couple of young women mentioned that the mother-daughter exercising experience was beneficial for both
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parties as it reinforced their relationships as well as providing the impetus to maintain an exercise schedule.

The reassurance provided by female-only gyms was important even for some of the young women interviewed who had a long history of mixed-gender social team sports. Twenty-three-year-old community worker Annie (OMPI11) not only perceived the company of her friends or sisters as support for trying new things for leisure, but also found this option ‘less intimidating than with a mixed group doing heavier weights’ and so she ‘prefer[s] to do the lighter weights with other females’ (Annie, OMPI11). As the second youngest of four children in the sporty family, the incorporation of regular gym sessions each week was starting to conflict with her commitment to the family team sports each week. She felt that making the shift to more sessions in the gym with her new boyfriend instead of team sports with her family would be valuable. She would be able to use the women’s section of the gym while her boyfriend used the mixed area. As Annie adjusted her routine to include her new boyfriend, she acknowledged that the prospect of feeling more in charge of her time was strong encouragement for her to shift from team sports to individualised gym activities.

Most participants described the motivational effects other people to be about feeling supported or sharing an experience. The considerable level of involvement with church group activities that absorbed so much of some individuals’ spare time was similar to the devotion of other interviewees to a particular recreational activity (such as Rod with fishing, Elias with wrestling, or Chris with tae kwon do). The main difference was the level of physical activity and the financial costs involved. The common denominator was the real time social network and the encouragement to participate that each provided.
6.4 Environmental Factors Associated with Leisure Time Physical Activity: Where Can They Play (And Do They Play There Anyway)?

The old adage, you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink, aptly summarises the triangulation of key findings from the environmental surveys, the participant interviews and the key informant interviews with the local member for council in each area (although the example of the sporty family would suggest that it is possible). Together these findings support those presented in the previous chapter in clarifying the actions of individual young adults within their specific environmental and social contexts. They retain this intricate relationship with the places and lifestyles of their childhood and the values as a legacy of their upbringing and their physical environment. Through their quite different stories and explanations, they highlight important relationships between outdoor spaces, inner-city upbringing and physical activity in young adulthood.

6.4.1 Neighbourhood characteristics, values and physical activity. For participants who had grown up on larger suburban or rural blocks, the relatively cramped living spaces of living in the inner-city area sometimes failed to balance the benefits, conveniences and variety of facilities. As Liz (IMPI05) explained, living in a small townhouse or apartment with little or no garden was very different from the expanse of their childhood backyards that she and others like her now longed for as young adults making their own way in a large city. Liz, now living in an inner-metropolitan area, described growing up in rural northern New South Wales on acreage. Now surrounded by neighbours in a small townhouse with an enclosed paved courtyard, she missed the acreage where she could keep and ride horses in her youth.

Irish-born Sean recalled growing up on a large house block on the outskirts of Dublin and now shared an apartment in the trendy older suburb of West End, South
Brisbane (IMPI10). While he appreciated the convenient location, he also yearned for spaces that are more open for his recreation and greatly enjoyed heading out to the coastal areas to surf whenever he could. For both Liz and Sean, being physically active was a critical part of their upbringing and now living in the relatively cramped confines of small, shared accommodation in the inner-city suburbs, they missed the free-range upbringing of their youth. This crystallised for them their need to be active and out-of-doors. Understandably, both talked about their commitment to living away from the city in the future, somewhere they could have a house with a big yard or acreage, especially Liz, who wanted to own horses so she could ride in her spare time.

Those who liked to jog or walk mentioned the aesthetic and physical features of their physical environment. In particular, those who lived near or in well-maintained outdoor areas tended to utilise these areas to walk to relax and as part of their commute to work. As well as living in a neighbourhood suitably set out for walking or jogging, participants who enjoyed these activities in their youth also walked or jogged as adults. Figures 6.7 and 6.8 show examples of such well-maintained areas. Their discussions highlight specific neighbourhood characteristics that were important for their participation in LTPA. They are essentially safe, clean outdoor spaces that are also modern and aesthetically pleasing: similar to those they enjoyed in their youth.

Table 6.1 summarises key physical features of each site for leisure in general, and where feasible and relevant, documents the quantity and quality of each characteristic. It outlines the array of facilities and equipment available for LTPA common to all study sites: maintained parkland with shelters, shared paths for cycling and walking or running, picnic facilities, public toilets, gardens, shade trees, car parking, taps and water fountains and rubbish bins. Table 6.1 also summaries the facilities only provided in some of the study sites: dedicated cycle paths, skate parks and
exercise equipment in the public parks. Despite the existence of many facilities, quite a few participants from the inner-metropolitan area in particular were not aware of some key facilities in their own area, most notably the centrally located public swimming pool in Musgrave Park. None of these interviewees could give any indication why they did not know about it.

This description of neighbourhood characteristics situates the participants interviewed in a ‘place’ where much of the physical and social context is evident to the reader. The photographs throughout the remainder of this chapter show contrasting pictures of the leisure opportunities for young adults and of the social and cultural influences surrounding them every day.

The environmental surveys provided the neighbourhood characteristics included in Table 6.1. Features such as leisure retailers, leisure services and facilities are included as are other features from my research questions and study design.
### Neighbourhood Characteristics of Study Sites, collected July–December, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood characteristics</th>
<th>Gin Gin area</th>
<th>Beenleigh area</th>
<th>South Brisbane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood characteristics</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Outer metropolitan</td>
<td>Inner metropolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street lighting</td>
<td>Residential areas—one side of the street only</td>
<td>Residential areas—one side of the street only</td>
<td>Residential areas—one side of the street only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business areas—both sides of street</td>
<td>Business areas—both sides of street</td>
<td>Business areas—both sides of street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predominantly functional</td>
<td>Predominantly functional</td>
<td>Predominantly functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths</td>
<td>On both sides of central shopping district in main street</td>
<td>On both sides of central shopping district</td>
<td>On both sides of central shopping district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On one side only of the roads surrounding the town centre</td>
<td>On one side only of the roads surrounding the CBD</td>
<td>On one side only of the roads surrounding the CBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None immediately out of town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared paths</td>
<td>None in CBD</td>
<td>Shared paths through public parkland (Bill Norris Oval &amp; Logan River Parkland on other side of Logan River); parallel to major access roads: Logan River Rd, Mount Warren Blvd, Milne St, Fryar Rd., parts of River Hills Rd, parts of Main St, parts of Pacific Motorway.</td>
<td>Some dedicated cycle paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 sections on outskirts of town heading out from town (Kookaburra Park Bikeway—shared path extending approx. 3 km from the outskirts of town past the high school and out to housing estate on other side of town; Black Gully Walking Trail extending for approx. 2 km east for the other end of town along the Bruce Highway) and the Tirroan Bikeway (approx. 5 km of converted rail line heading out of town</td>
<td>Pedestrian/cycle bridge across Logan River shared paths in Doug Larson Complex</td>
<td>Shared paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In newer suburbs and linking with Logan River Parklands (new in 2007)</td>
<td>Mostly in public parkland and dedicated active transport bridges across the Brisbane River (Goodwill Bridge &amp; Eleanor Schonell Bridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and Transitions</td>
<td>Towards the locality of Tirroan</td>
<td>Public Parkland</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cycle lanes</strong></td>
<td>Cycle lanes on either sides of roads: Blackbird St (leads to Logan River Parkland) Peacock Ave (leads to northern end of Doug Larson Complex) Green cycle lanes on either side of streets at 5-way junction in CBD: George Street, Kent St, Main St, City St</td>
<td>Cycle lanes on main roads throughout suburbs of South Brisbane, West End, Highgate Hill and Dutton Park</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public transport</strong></td>
<td>Bus network</td>
<td>Bus network &amp; train network throughout Brisbane Ferry network on Brisbane River linking South Brisbane with Brisbane CBD and suburbs of St Lucia, Kangaroo Point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public access parkland (passive space)</strong></td>
<td>BBQ &amp; picnic facilities in local parkland</td>
<td>BBQ &amp; picnic facilities in local parkland</td>
<td>BBQ &amp; picnic facilities in local parkland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recreation spaces dedicated to sedentary leisure</strong></td>
<td>Public bars Food outlets Video shop Community markets</td>
<td>Public bars Food outlets Shopping centres Community markets</td>
<td>Public bars Food outlets Community markets Cinema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recreation spaces dedicated to physical leisure activity, i.e., including freely available and commercial exercise options</strong></td>
<td>Small and dilapidated skate bowl Old outdoor tennis courts Old squash courts centre Outdoor half-court basketball court in local parkland Sports ground (athletics, football) Public swimming pool</td>
<td>Extensive BMX and skate park Exercise stations in Logan River Parklands Pedestrian bridge linking Beenleigh to Logan River Parklands Sports playing fields (cricket, soccer) Police Citizen’s Youth Club (PCYC) Verve Sports &amp; Health</td>
<td>Exercise stations along the riverbank Pedestrian bridges across Brisbane River linking South Brisbane area with Brisbane CBD and suburb of St Lucia Public swimming pool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although each location provides residents with a similar variety of general recreational facilities, and therefore basic opportunities, a few notable differences either limit uptake or do not provide for the young adult age group. In particular, a lack of public transport, modern sporting facilities and nightlife directly affects their options for active leisure. When compared on the same criterion, it becomes evident that the young adults in Gin Gin had access—not surprisingly—to more bushland and open spaces. Yet they had fewer and lower quality standard facilities for organised recreational pursuits, both active and sedentary, than their metropolitan counterparts.

6.4.2 Infrastructure for active leisure. With the items identified in Table 6.1 in mind, the focus of this section is on the infrastructure of certain neighbourhood characteristics that enable physically active leisure pursuits. Findings related to infrastructure are discussed under the following subheadings of shared paths and cycle lanes, sedentary and active spaces, and local government policy environments affecting active leisure.

6.4.2.1 Shared paths and cycle lanes. According to respondents, walking was the most common form of active leisure for both females and males almost equally, and

| General terrain | Lawn bowls club | Centre | Outdoor netball courts | School playgrounds and ovals (1 primary school & 1 high school) | Public swimming pool | Showgrounds | Mostly flat; some gentle undulations | Undulating; some suburbs have steep hills |
cycling was the second most common; many included walking or riding for transport as a choice and because they enjoyed it, they included it as leisure. Although reported more by participants in the metropolitan areas than the rural areas, the common active leisure pursuits of walking, cycling and running utilise this type of infrastructure and so are useful for further discussion.

In the rural town, infrastructure for cycling and walking is limited to standard footpaths and roads, a small functional skate bowl (used for BMX riding) and three dedicated shared paths heading in three different directions out of town. One of these paths uses a decommissioned rail line to Tirroan (5 km away), another is the bitumen Black Gully Walking Trail linking the town with the sports ground and the third is the Kookaburra Park Bikeway linking the town with the Kookaburra Park eco-estate. A few participants from this area mentioned cycling to high school as a teenager, but otherwise, most described patterns of travel that centred on driving.

By contrast, participants in the metropolitan study sites mentioned using their shared paths more regularly for leisure. This was especially so for participants living in South Brisbane, where many more shared paths provide easier access for pedestrians, cyclists and skateboarders travelling through the green spaces, and more of these participants described using a combination of active and public transport. In addition, the two dedicated pedestrian bridges crossing the Brisbane River link South Brisbane with the Botanic Gardens and the Queensland Institute of Technology (via the Goodwill Bridge) to the east, and the University of Queensland main campus (via the Eleanor Shonnell Bridge) to the south-west, providing active transport corridors. These bridges feature wide shared paths and are fitted with emergency phones, security cameras, effective lighting, resting spots and drinking fountains. The bridges provide safe, pleasant and easy-to-use infrastructure.
These bridges link an extensive public transport network of ferries, rail, buses and taxis that facilitate movement into and around the city centre with relative convenience. However, despite this commitment to active forms of leisure and transport, the suburban streets of South Brisbane remain without cycle lanes because of the expense of retrofitting, forcing those cycling or skateboarding for transport to share the footpaths with pedestrians or the roads with motorists in heavy traffic. Since my data collection in 2008, the efforts of the Brisbane City Council to enhance active transport and the liveability of the city spaces has seen more active and public transport initiatives introduced to the South Brisbane area. Cycle rickshaws now take passengers across the bridge from the City to South Brisbane (an expensive novelty likely to be more attractive to tourists) and bicycle hire stations and lockers dot the Brisbane City area. Such is the dedication of Cr Helen Abrahams to actualise the aspiration of the Brisbane City Council to make Queensland’s capital city the most liveable and active city in Australia. As a medical doctor and an avid cyclist herself, Cr Abrahams encourages her constituents to be as physically active as they can. This type of vision and resolute commitment to the physical activity needs of residents is not obvious in the interviews with the local councillors from the other areas, and suggests the importance of an advocate for physical activity at the political level.

6.4.2.2 Hurdles at the local government level. Although participants in the outer-metropolitan and rural areas voiced their strong preference for a cinema and more appropriate nightclubs, local councillors for each study site highlighted the difficulties

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14 The Brisbane City Council policy imperative to make the city more ‘liveable’ has led to an expansion of relevant areas such as public and active transport systems, attention to the safety, usability and aesthetics of public parklands and other spaces.
in securing the necessary private sector investment. Although he did not offer any financial or planning details, outer-metropolitan councillor Ray Hackwood provided assurance of the careful planning he does in order to spread the annual budget for his division across residents of all ages within his area (OMKI01). By contrast, South Brisbane councillor Helen Abrahams enthusiastically described how she has had to fight for a balanced development plan—one that provides facilities for the public as well as the more exclusive facilities pushed for by commercial developers. She described the ‘absolute [and] the greatest threat to this age group in their recreational activities whether indoor or outdoor, will be the development, the opportunistic sort’ (Cr Helen Abrahams, IMKI01).

Cr Abrahams explained that the open recreational spaces in the inner-metropolitan areas are under particular threat from the developers in her area, who want to build opportunistically, thus reducing the opportunities for community use. She believes wholeheartedly that the public access or ‘passive’ recreational spaces in urban areas help to create and strengthen healthy happy communities in an organic sustainable fashion: ‘it’s group activities . . . it’s groups coming together’ (Cr Abrahams IMKI01).

From the rural viewpoint, Cr Wayne Honor reinforced the stance he takes with council on the importance of transport systems as social connectors for the survival of rural communities. Providing an impassioned conclusion to his interview, Cr Honor described how he reminds council of the need to focus on the issues of distances and transport for rural youth to ensure that living in rural areas is an attractive option for their future:

I’m the roads and drainage councillor for the region and when I am involved in transport . . . that’s what I talk about, connectivity and the wagon wheel approach and I believe that that’s the way to go and, we’ve got to be proactive in
designing a future for our community and the young people have got to be included. There’s been somewhat of a narrow-minded view about us being an ageing community, and all our focus should be placed towards the ageing, but that’s a road to nowhere because, if you are not bringing the young people on, that generation’s going to drop off the end and you’re going to find that you’ve got no, that’s the base, that’s where it all happens from, it’s from the young people, they grow up through society and they bring society along with them.

(Cr Wayne Honor, RKI03)

In Beenleigh, the relatively new shared paths throughout the extensive public parks and wetlands areas of Bill Norris Oval and Logan River Parkland provide pleasant and seemingly safe active recreation options for all ages (see photographs in Figure 6.7). A dedicated cycle and pedestrian bridge (the Red Bridge) crosses the Logan River to link Beenleigh with the Logan River Parkland (officially opened in 2007 as a joint venture with the Logan City Council) and to the Doug Larson Complex. The Logan River Parkland provides new exercise stations, barbeque and picnic facilities. A likely consequence of the lower volume of traffic through the smaller CBD is the installation in Beenleigh of green cycle lanes in the heart of the CBD, and cycle lanes leading from the CBD to the Logan River and the Red Bridge. Despite this active transport infrastructure, none of the interviewees for this area mentioned using it.

6.4.2.3 ‘Passive’ and ‘active’ spaces. The environmental surveys show each area as having a variety of facility types designed for either paying or free recreational use. These come under two categories: user-pay facilities for organised sport, fitness and recreation; and free-of-charge natural or green spaces designated for public use including physical activity. Typically, these green spaces include shared paths, basketball hoops and areas for skateboarding (with the exception of South Brisbane),
and exercise stations and fitness circuits (with the exception of Gin Gin). As Cr Abrahams from the inner-metropolitan area pointed out, the town planners consider these spaces ‘passive’. She explained that the concepts come from a planning and development perspective and that the differences between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ recreation spaces are about the type of community engagement involved. The ‘active’ spaces are those where organised activities take place, for example, a designated sports club, leisure centre or fitness complex, whereas ‘passive’ spaces are those where town planners make few prescriptions about what sort of activities will take place, although they often include infrastructure to enable outdoor pursuits such as walking, running, fitness circuits and cycling. Such ‘passive’ spaces as community parks provide opportunities for individuals or groups to gather, play self-organised games, contemplate, generally commune, walk pets, picnic, exercise and so on. In this way, the design of the spaces is for general community usage and is reminiscent of the type of settings for free-range play experienced in childhood and youth. Although outside the scope of this study, it does prompt the question: What does ‘free-range play’ look like in adulthood? Is it the tinkering in the shed described by some of the rural young men (more indoors and low-level activity), or the Sunday barbeques and games of frisbee of the sporty family (outdoors and active), or Elias’s semi-professional wrestling (indoors and active), or the youth group music rehearsals or movie nights (indoors and sedentary)? Photographs from the environmental surveys include a glimpse of adult free-range play in action (see Figure 6.5); however, the interview data indicate that the ‘passive’ spaces are used more minimally than the ‘active’ spaces, especially fitness centres and gymnasiums.
Living close to suburban gyms enabled nearly half of the respondents to utilise the gym for their LTPA. With the exception of Eddie (OMPI07), exercising at the gym was one of the few activities that respondents generally took up only as adults.

The environmental survey data show a wide variety of facilities and services offering physical activities for a fee (gymnasiums/fitness centres, swimming pools, sports centres, enclosed playing fields, tennis and squash courts), and photographs of these places show an equally wide variety of aesthetic qualities. This user-pay system applies also to sedentary leisure facilities and services such as cafés, restaurants, cinemas and theatres. As many of the interviewees confirmed, the quality of the facility or service, free or otherwise, affects their patronage. Aesthetics, convenience, affordability and the opportunity to socialise in a safe environment were common denominators for them when choosing to use a service or facility for their leisure. This makes the role of community consultation and market research in town planning critical. However, despite the expectations of residents, their engagement with the local councils who sanction local development is negligible. Planning for health-promoting environments remains the mandate of the Brisbane City Council, as it badges itself as a ‘healthy city’.

**6.4.3 Engaging young adults in the planning process: A perpetual problem.**

Cr Abrahams from South Brisbane expressed the most exasperation about the lack of
involvement of young adults in the political process in her district. She thought their failure to engage inhibits the provision of appropriate facilities and services for young adults generally: ‘I also suggest that many of them are cynical about politics and therefore they have found their own ways to meet their needs quite separate from me, quite separate from the political structures, and I regret that, I think that’s very sad’ (IMKI01). This sadness deepened with her observation that the young adults in her constituency underutilise the community schemes and partnerships in the area. All three councillors found it difficult to reach their young adult constituents and engage them in meaningful dialogue about fulfilling their needs within the community. The following quote from Beenleigh Cr Ray Hackwood exemplifies this frustration:

Well you can’t target them . . . how do you target people in that age group? They’re into more nightclub type things, as we say, once they’ve got their driver’s licence we’ve lost them. So off they go, their parents don’t know where they are half the time. Probably Southport\textsuperscript{15} car park you’ll find them, from here, that’s where they all seem to go. (Cr Ray Hackwood, OMKI01)

This links to the stage of social and cognitive development for their age group, in particular for those aged 18–24, and reflects the common focus on themselves and personal enjoyment over doing something for the community (with the exception of some in the faith-based groups). Indeed, it was obvious that the motivation to have a fun time was higher than the motivation to be physically active in their spare time for the 18–24 year olds. It also helps to explain the broader perceptions of those who were slightly older.

\textsuperscript{15} Southport is a suburb on the Gold Coast, an approximately 35 min drive south of Beenleigh.
6.4.4 Spaces for free outdoor physical activity: Everything is relative (and not equitable). The most notable limitation in quantity, quality and accessibility of opportunities for free exercise is in Gin Gin, where the outdoor exercise facilities are relatively simple, small scale and often run down (see photographs in Figure 6.6).

Despite many opportunities for free exercise in each area, very few of the young adults interviewed mentioned using these facilities, and although it is outside the scope of this study to measure the usage of these areas (nor is it done by the local council), it is easy to imagine that the facilities are rarely used. Reflecting their changing preferences through adolescence and into early adulthood, interviewees were attracted to the type of social activities that helped them find a partner. Almost in contradiction to their idyllic free-range childhood, many of them preferred to pay for excitement, rather than find it free in their local surrounds.
By contrast, the outer- and inner-metropolitan study sites offer an array of opportunities for free exercise in attractive green spaces and often by sections of the river or ponds. With the combination of relatively less road traffic, more shared paths, dedicated cycle lanes and flatter terrain than South Brisbane, the Beenleigh area offers residents apparently good options for free access to green spaces in which to be physically active. Figure 6.7 presents a selection of photographs that highlight these key features. Since its incorporation into the Logan City Shire, Beenleigh residents have benefited from the infrastructure and resources and been linked across the river by a dedicated pedestrian bridge to the recreation opportunities offered at the Logan River Parklands. The exercise stations pictured are located at the Logan River Parklands (opened in 2007), which features disabled access picnic shelters, electric barbeques, multiple children’s playgrounds, wetlands areas, open green spaces, shaded picnic and quiet areas, and free parking.
Figure 6.7. Aesthetic qualities of some of the free exercise opportunities in the Beenleigh study site.

The banks of the Brisbane River, which wrap around three sides of the study site (see Figure 6.8), provides beautiful spaces for well-presented and maintained opportunities for free outdoor exercise in the inner-metropolitan area. Older open green spaces, gardens and walkways are available in Musgrave Park, where the local public swimming pool is located. In contrast to the other areas, South Brisbane has two dedicated pedestrian and cycle bridges that enable people to walk, run, cycle or skate
across the river. The car bridge from South Bank to the City centre (Victoria Bridge) also has a wide shared path in both directions. Although these dedicated paths enable safe and convenient access across and along the Brisbane River, they are separate from the surrounding suburbs or paths through the heart of the city. As explained by Cr Helen Abrahams, retrofitting these older suburbs with cycle lanes and paths remains an expensive and difficult proposition (IMKI01).
6.4.5 The role of place and space in leisure time physical activity. These photographs of typical sites of recreation and physical activity for this (or any) age
group illustrate the broader connection between spaces and enablers or inhibitors. The advertising billboards in Figures 6.9 and 6.10 and the markets and community artwork shown in Figures 6.11–6.14 provide powerful examples of the values on public display in Beenleigh and Gin Gin respectively. Images of the pastoral pioneering history of Gin Gin and Beenleigh as well as the ‘one-stop-shop’ dining, gambling and entertainment venues of Beenleigh dot their respective CBDs.

By contrast, Figures 6.16 and 6.17 show a major mural on South Brisbane’s railway station, and a map of the cultural precinct and its South Bank facility, and serve as examples of the past and present interactions of people in place. As many interviewees mentioned, these purposefully designed spaces and carefully maintained areas create comfortable places where they could meet others and relax. These qualities ultimately attract people from outside the area as well, with a few of the Beenleigh interviewees opting to have their interviews at South Bank because they enjoyed the atmosphere so much and travel there was easy on the train.

*Figure 6.9. Beenleigh Sports Club, where sports, entertainment, dining, gambling and drinking intersect.*
Figure 6.10. 24 hr fast-food outlet in Beenleigh.

The rural Museum Market in Gin Gin shown in Figure 6.11 offers a very different type of space for community gatherings compared with those of the urban areas. Held every Saturday morning in the grounds of the Historical Society at the site of the decommissioned rail station near the centre of town, this fresh produce market is a focal point of the Gin Gin community (see Figure 6.11) and an opportunity to sell handmade crafts and fresh local produce. Visiting the market is a very popular leisure pursuit among locals of all ages; they share stories and meet with Cr Wayne Honor, who is a regular at the community event. Contrasting this is the ‘Lifestyle Market’ at South Brisbane (see Figure 6.18), which is a tourist attraction that sells commercial-quality arts and crafts in the prime South Bank location. It has long trading hours throughout the weekend and is a popular shopping and social hub. While both markets provide a community focus and attract people to the areas regularly, they offer only sedentary leisure options and are unused by local organisations to promote their active recreation options.
Figure 6.11. Low-key community fresh produce and craft market in Gin Gin, held every Saturday morning in the local Historical Society grounds.

As an outsider documenting environmental features and listening to locals share their understandings and experiences with active forms of leisure, the way that the contrasting neighbourhood characteristics seemed to subtly reflect or influence people interested me. Although the extent to which these attributes influenced participation is outside of the scope of this study, it does raise questions for further inquiry. That those interviewed individually and in focus groups were generally drawn to areas with larger populations and more or different opportunities for leisure suggests that the inherent qualities or opportunities in those places are highly valued, or illustrate the novelty value of a leisure experience in an alternate location. The messages about community identity and lifestyle that local billboards, signage and community murals portray to the outsider differ greatly between study sites. For example, in the rural area, the dominant visual images are of a series of vibrant murals in the main street depicting the European agricultural and social pioneering roots of the town (see Figure 6.12). In the outer-metropolitan area, similar murals highlight the sugar cane industry and white colonial pioneering history (see Figure 6.13), alongside community artworks from a town centre beautification project (see Figure 6.14) and leisure activities that focus on alcohol and gambling (see Figure 6.15).

Vastly different images feature in the inner-metropolitan area of South Brisbane. Instead of historical murals showcasing the taming of the land for agriculture by white
colonials, a mural on the outside of the railway station displays images of Indigenous Australian identity, links to the environment and sport from the 2000 Olympic Games (see Figure 6.16). Closer to the Brisbane River and the heart of Brisbane City itself, the cultural precinct of South Bank includes Brisbane’s premier museum, art gallery, performing arts centre and state library (see Figure 6.17) alongside the vibrant green spaces and Lifestyle Market of South Bank Parkland (see Figure 6.18).

Figure 6.12. Section of a public mural on the main street of rural Gin Gin depicting scenes from the early 1800s and its rural pioneering background. Note the absence of reference to the Indigenous people of the area in this public account.
Figure 6.13. Sections of public murals in Beenleigh showing recollections from history and a connection to its pioneering roots. Note the absence of reference to the Indigenous people of the area in this public account.
Figure 6.14. Example of a community artwork project in the centre of Beenleigh that shows a warm regard for the area.

Figure 6.15. Some of the licensed entertainment options in Beenleigh.
Figure 6.16. Mural in the IM area of South Brisbane depicting Indigenous Australians, identity, community, environment and sport.

Figure 6.17. The cultural precinct by the Brisbane River showing the Queensland Art Gallery, the Gallery of Modern Art, State Library of Queensland, Queensland Museum, Queensland Performing Arts Centre and surrounding community spaces used for weekly South Bank Lifestyle Markets.
6.5 Summary

The findings presented in this chapter highlight the combined importance of location (especially access to leisure facilities), income and social networks to the direct experience of LTPA of participants. I identified common barriers to their LTPA to be limited money, time, opportunities and access to facilities appropriate to their age and stage of life. Although participants explained a variety of strategies to overcome or at least manage these barriers, their explanations revealed issues and personal circumstances that negatively affected the physical and emotional energy and resources available to them. They discussed how under- and over-employment, limited free time, stressful jobs and their use of disposable income for extra items for leisure pursuits affected what, how and why they used their spare time. From their own descriptions, it was also evident that, in turn, these features mostly discouraged physical active leisure.
In the main, these young adults required the social and financial support of friends, family and community groups to enable their leisure, and some areas provided more opportunities and tangible support for physical activity than others. These features affected not only the opportunities to be active but also, and importantly, the availability of aesthetically pleasing, safe social and physical spaces in which to be active. As the older interviewees reflected, this helped to shape their realisation of the role and place of physical activity for the ongoing maintenance of their physical self as well as their emotional self.
Chapter 7: You Can Lead a Horse to Water . . .

At the beginning of this thesis, I suggested that conscious effort and a preference or a predisposition for physical movement might be more important for people’s participation in LTPA than other well-documented influences (such as the walkability or safety of a neighbourhood or having a companion to exercise with). I wondered about the influences of consumerism and sedentary leisure options, in particular what aspects of life affected the experience of being physically active for people living in rural and urban areas, and what were the differences, if any, for young adults living there. Were there common features to do with actual experience of being at leisure and/or being physically active that provided a sense of lasting enjoyment, even flow? To investigate these questions, my project examined the perspectives and contexts of young adults in three different geographical locations in Australia, and set out to identify and investigate the barriers to and facilitators of their LTPA. This novel approach has brought new considerations about the experiences and understandings of individuals with regard to their physical activity to the foreground.

Through the research findings, my work contributes knowledge about the perceptions of young adults regarding their experiences of leisure and physical activity. Underpinned by information about their local environment, it pinpoints the key issues of enjoyment and effort that need addressing if health-enhancing levels of physical activity are to become a common part of health behaviour for this age group.

When considering the findings as a whole, it is evident that the way young adults understand leisure and physical activity, find satisfaction and make meaning from their experiences is underpinned by their past and opened up by their present exposure, and is central to their everyday LTPA practice. Fundamentally, what matters to them
Revolves around the key qualities of the leisure time experience itself: effortless enjoyment and the nine R’s of leisure—particularly rest, relaxation and recuperation.

For the participants in my study, leisure was both a type of time and an experience, and whereas physical activity was an accepted part of a healthy lifestyle for some, it was an unpleasant and unnecessary experience for many others. This disconnect from being physical forms the main barrier to LTPA for them.

The preference of an individual to enjoy, or at least appreciate, physical movement was central to enabling their participation in physical activity, whenever and however it occurred. The combined qualities of the direct experience of leisure and physical activity were important to whether they were physically active or not. Given their financial resources and ability to travel, they used their surrounding environments as best they could.

In line with Ryan and Deci’s SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), extended periods of distress can have the effect of immobilising a young adult’s ability to be self-motivated. Here, the influence of the affective response on motivation is active. When life shifts up a gear and fatigue from full-time work sets in, or confusion about new relationships or responsibilities of adulthood, rest and relaxation with peers becomes the comfort zone of young adults, and where sedentary leisure becomes their default option. This understanding and experience comes from their youth, with close family members and social groups playing a main part in their inculcation into behavioural patterns.

7.1 Overview of Findings

Analysing the circumstances and perspectives of 61 young adults on leisure and their LTPA puts a spotlight on some of the key enablers and inhibitors for their physical activity practice, and other health-related behaviours. It is evident that their particular living arrangement had a large influence on their everyday lifestyles. This influenced
what they had access to and why, and how and why they prioritised aspects of their lives. What they did for leisure and how they responded to the idea of being active was a product of their expectations, their perceptions, what they valued, what meaning they made of leisure and physically active experiences, what sensations they were seeking, and what gave them pleasure and personal satisfaction.

Overall, the findings encapsulate their understandings and practices of leisure in the different geographical areas where these individuals lived, worked and played. The descriptions show that the concept of physical activity for leisure was not necessarily compatible with the life stage of many of them, and that some came to understand and value the nature and purpose of physical activity later in their 20s, when the need to set aside time for their health maintenance became more apparent.

For many people in my study, the experience of physical activity and its proxy exercise was typically about pain, fatigue or discomfort, which was very different from the leisure experience they sought (which was ultimately about relaxation and pleasure). Taking their lead from past experiences and what they felt would best meet their emotional needs at the time, the young adults adapted what they did for leisure to suit the situation. With the need to feel in control and comfortable, they often opted for leisure pursuits that were social and provided a sense of pleasure and companionship that often entailed little or no physical activity.

In my study, the combination of individual perspectives and local area data lends a critical perspective on individual behaviours (life choices) to discussions concerning health and wellbeing. By describing the influences and interactions of co-existing factors at the individual, environmental, socio-economic and cultural levels, the connections with many of the socio-economic and cultural determinants of health (life chances) are clearer. In so doing, my exploration contributes to the current literature on
the known correlates of physical activity (such as Bauman et al., 2012; McCormack & Shiell, 2011; Sallis et al., 2009; Salmon et al., 2014) and especially for youth and young adults (such as Cerin et al., 2010; Jose et al., 2011; Jose & Hansen, 2010; Uijtdewilligen et al., 2014).

In essence, young adults are looking to maximise particular sensations they experience during their spare time, whether sedentary or active. They do this through a combination of consumer practices and priorities based on safety, risk, comfort and immediacy. Because of the general fatigue they feel as they adjust to the demands of life as an adult, they feel most benefit in low-level or sedentary forms of leisure. There are three standout points for discussion:

1. The inculcation of physical activity in the lifestyle of families can embed the habitual practice of moving for pleasure and social contact.

2. The influence of commodities for leisure or the commodification of leisure means that people often believe that quality leisure entails having quality products, and that paying for things for leisure makes the experience more tangible.

3. People will prioritise their leisure based on what they feel is safe, comfortable and fulfils their needs at the time, relative to their own comfort zone for risk—immediacy guides most of their choices.

If young adults have experienced extensive LTPA and have been raised to be physically literate they are more conscious of incorporating physical activity into their lives as they negotiate adult roles and responsibilities if they already have. To participants in this position, being physically active was straightforward: they were empowered by deep familiarity and enjoyment of moving with family and friends, they adopted strategies that maximised their ability to afford quality items or services to
enhance their active leisure, and opportunities to do so were provided locally and accessible.

Responding to the key research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis, the following sections outline what I found to be the key enablers and inhibitors to LTPA of the young adults in my study.

### 7.2 Enablers for Leisure and Leisure Time Physical Activity

The data analysis highlights many enablers (facilitators) of leisure and LTPA for young adults. Thematically, these are:

- inculcation and habits;
- sensation seeking;
- internal motivation;
- social support (linked to self-efficacy, others for motivation and role modelling healthy behaviours);
- close proximity to facilities and infrastructure for transport, entertainment, employment and study (linked to convenience and active transport)—especially for urban dwellers; and
- financial resources (linked to ready access to quality products, facilities or services).

The combined influences of family, upbringing, the physical environment and the developing identity during adolescence and young adulthood, emerge as critical elements shaping the LTPA practices of participants. As themes, they encapsulate the dynamic nature of leisure and highlight links with the personal, social, environmental and the economic factors, and describe the enablers for the physical activity of young adults in their spare time.
Unless they had consistent exposure and support to be habitually physically active in their youth, the majority of participants aged 18-24 years did not have a clear understanding of the enjoyment that could be derived from being physically active. The overriding enabler is typified by the young adults in their mid to late 20s, who held the mindset that being active can be enjoyable and is an important feature of maintaining one’s own health, and therefore, should be incorporated into daily routines. The use of social groups such as networks of family and friends can provide an external motivation for many that help sustain an individual through difficult times.

7.3 Inhibitors for Leisure and Leisure Time Physical Activity

The main pressures impeding the full participation of young adults in active forms of leisure are themed as:

- preferring sedentary leisure options, linked to personal concepts of leisure;
- personal barriers—such as lack of confidence, indecision, difficult transitions in life, fatigue and personality type (especially introversion);
- limited time and money (linked to under-/unemployment, low wages; work/study/transport); and
- environmental restrictions (linked to physical living environment; geography and lack of facilities; transport pressures).

The biggest obstacle to being physically active during leisure time for the participants was the emphasis they placed on taking it easy, as opposed to moving, during their spare time. Their focus on leisure as a time for relaxation and rest incorporated the creation and continuation of their social connections, but rarely included physical movement on a scale required to meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines for adults. It would seem that the drain on emotions and energy that my
participants experienced as they negotiated the various transitions in their lives helps to establish a pattern of leisure that centres on sedentary pursuits.

These findings distinguish between the wants and needs of young adults as individuals in their specific contexts and their engagement with neighbourhood characteristics for active leisure (their LTPA practices). In doing so, the findings illustrate ideologies—ways of being in the world and ways of knowing or understanding oneself in the world—that explain what enables or inhibits the participation of young adults in LTPA. Although my findings do not challenge current notions about the importance of neighbourhood characteristics for healthy living, nor for the effect of the immediate context on the way people value physical activity itself, they do signal the important role of sedentary leisure in a person’s enjoyment in life and their mental health. Effectively, the stage of adjustment to adulthood itself is the overarching barrier to LTPA for this age group. Their use of spare time is driven more by needing to feel a sense of control and balance when they are adjusting to adult routines and expectations: having this perception permits uncomplicated down time, a focus on rest, and the freedom to do what they want rather than what others expect of them. As they establish routines, this need for balance seems to translate for some into an ethos of health maintenance where moderate levels of exercise become a necessary facet to weave consciously into their routine.

7.4 The Crux of the Issue

The heart of the issue of physical inactivity for young adults is twofold. The first part is that many of them do not personally identify with or seem to enjoy physical activity, and the second is the preference they give, at this stage of their lives, to social endeavours. Rural young adults face an additional third issue of area disadvantage that serves to compound their barriers to physically active leisure.
When participants described fulfilling the elements of the nine R’s of leisure described in Chapter 5 mostly through sedentary pursuits and socialising with friends, they were acknowledging the demands arising from their stage of life. For most participants in this study, the desired *effortless enjoyment* of leisure pursuits was really about achieving a state of flow, albeit at a low level of challenge. The health risk lies in this becoming a long-term preference with the potential for long-term consequences (Christakis & Fowler, 2007).

The young adult life stage is central to the problem. As they transition from adolescence to adult life, their preference for rest and relaxation in their spare time overrides most other concerns, except perhaps for their preference to socialise with companions. Compounding this is the effect that prior experience has on whether they personally identify with, and practices, being physically active or not. Further fuelling expectations for enjoying their experiences in spare time are the consumer practices inherent in modern society that are especially dominant in urban areas. Personal circumstances, particularly rurality and low income, serve to be a constant restriction for the choices that young adults can make.

Therefore, when they are tired after work, winding down with comfortable, low-intensity pursuits provides the immediate sensation of relaxation and rest they seek. This satisfies the immediate affective response to feel rested and unstressed. If they lack the inculcation or indoctrination into the practice of regular physical activity, then they use the mechanisms that they are familiar with and have enjoyed in the past, and seek recuperation mostly through sedentary pursuits. This then forms a habit of inactivity and

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16 The need to relax, reboot, regenerate, rejuvenate, renew, re-centre, re-energise, release and for relief.
Time and Transitions

becomes important to address as a psychosocial factor limiting their participation in physical activities.

The next step is to consider how this becomes an automatic part of an individual’s way of living, regardless of context. Recollections from the different sibling groups suggest that a major part of the answer lies in how children are inculcated into LTPA during their formative years and then encouraged to enjoy being active throughout their years of formal education (to be physically literate) (Banwell et al., 2012; Davies, 2011; Whitehead, 2010). In part, the answer to this can be drawn from a mixture of examples from the data: family-oriented inculcation into social physical activities such as social team sports, exercise at a gym or fitness centre, weekend picnics, fishing, water activities, cycling, walking or jogging; a stable family life; provision of opportunities for free-range play in childhood; positive experiences of physical activity at school; shared family resources, especially transport, fees and equipment; and the normalisation and enjoyment of regular physical activity in the lives of the family members and friendship circles.

The young adults in my study had a strong sense of ownership of their leisure time, and with that, firm ideas about what they ought to be doing in that time. As they developed their own ways to structure their time and manage their financial resources, they were also developing an understanding and valuing and, for some eventually, a prioritising of physical activity for the maintenance of their own physical and mental health. In particular, when they lived away from the family home, they were creating their own domestic reality, complete with ideas about how to use the different types of time they now had to manage. Dedicating time to be active, whether it is for transport, for fitness or to be social, was now also under their control. What was not under their control, however, and this was particularly so for the rural young people, was how much
money they had to spend and the facilities that were accessible to them, and how familiar they were with managing their own physical activity.

The interaction between the individual level factors and circumstances and the consumption practices of participants had a noticeable effect on their participation in LTPA. Of particular note was how this influenced their attitude to being physically active, and most importantly, whether they enjoyed it enough to invest in it financially and emotionally, and value it as a part of their own daily practice. My research suggests that it would be constructive to focus on the emotional responses of young adults rather than on the temporal dimensions of leisure. My research supports the enhancement of mechanisms that would support them to discover (or rediscover) the pleasure and restorative benefits of physical movement. Developing the physical literacy of young people is potentially just as influential for their physical activity as the array of enabling neighbourhood characteristics that surrounds them. There needs to be space for purposeful opportunities for physical literacy in education and community settings.

Given the value young adults place on companionship, working with the social structures that they interact with while young are logical places to start integrating physical literacy and foster the enjoyment of physical movement as a social experience (in schools, families, local councils, church groups, sporting organisations and the like).

Another major consideration is the concept that physical activity falls into the category of health maintenance rather than leisure, and hence into dedicated time rather than free time. According to the young adults in my research, there is actually no such thing as leisure time physical activity; rather, there is time other than work time that they dedicated to physical activity (or exercise) but this is not what they called leisure. This highlights an important difference in the use of the terminology in health research and health promotion. The physical activity needed for maintaining a base level of
mental health, stress release, cardiovascular health, bone density, strength and conditioning and so on should be incorporated into a category denoting available time. To more accurately represent time usage and enumerate physical activity for health research, we should be considering the explicit placement of a temporal category for health maintenance and other conscious processes in which people are consciously enhancing their health. Rather than coming under the categories of leisure or spare time, such a term could be considered structured or dedicated, or have its own descriptor that highlights the importance of personal health maintenance time (such as health maintenance time, or more specific to physical activity: dedicated physical activity time).

Therefore, the responsibility for being physically active for the maintenance of health and wellbeing conceivably needs to shift from the individual (as has been promoted in contemporary public health campaigns) to being more of a societal responsibility and enabled as a communal and shared experience. As opportunities for physical activity decreases in modern lifestyles, the concept of being physically active (and the likelihood of actually enjoying being so) requires individuals to develop a heightened degree of physical literacy and support within the social structures of their local environs; and is shown diagrammatically in Figure 7.1.
7.5 Theoretical Perspectives: Flow and Autonomy

Existing theories from sociology, anthropology and psychology offer insights into the role of the cultural milieu, and the experience of flow to enhance pleasure in a given activity. Models of health behaviour from the field of psychology offer theories about behaviour change for improved health outcomes, such as the theory of reasoned action, the health belief model and, more recently, the integrated behavioural model (Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2008), that support the idea that intentions are the main aspect determining behaviour.

When aiming to understand what makes a leisure experience enjoyable for young adults, it is helpful to return to Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) and, in particular, to Mitchell’s (1988) confirmation that flow can be experienced in sedentary leisure activities. This has particular relevance for the young adult whose brain is still developing, and for whom the additional experience of the disruptions and adjustments to adult life may constitute psychic entropy, and in turn fatigue. It follows that the immediate gratification provided
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by sedentary lifestyle choices would satisfy this fatigue, at least until the person moves into the next phase of life and begins to think differently.

The effortless involvement in sedentary forms of leisure and having a sense of control contribute to the attraction of many sedentary leisure pursuits. They are also key features that are absent for many participants from physically active forms of leisure. Although not in total accord with Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988) original ideal of complete engagement to attain flow, leisure pursuits requiring low levels of physical activity and apparent complexity such as socialising, watching television or playing computer games, still require cognitive processing. This could be substantial in relation to the amount of energy the younger participants said they had left after a day at work.

It follows that if individuals experience a sense of flow during sedentary leisure pursuits, but not during physically active ones, they will be more likely to engage in the former than the latter. As young adults mature and become more adept at the day-to-day routines of work, developing, and maintaining social connections, they are more likely to have the emotional energy to devote to other aspects of their lives, and prioritise physical activity.

Many of my participants said that they actually needed time to chill out and simply relax for their mental health. This resonates with Mitchell’s proposition that the range of leisure pursuits in where flow is experienced is broad, is not merely limited to sports and can include sedentary pursuits to which individuals are committed and in which they find meaning (Mitchell, 1988). The sedentary leisure practices of interviewees can link to another of Csikszentmihalyi’s theories. In his consideration of the debilitating state of mind that causes inaction, known as psychic entropy, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) explains that it operates as an innate and powerful motivator for wanting to counteract the disarray of a hectic life. If physical activity does not help
to remediate the type of busyness or disorder that causes fatigue in young adults’ lives and foster experiences of flow and optimal experience for them, then there is little prospect of them taking the physical activity message on board.

This rationale for inactivity relates to the present issue of how individuals interact with each other in their social and physical environments. Specifically, it relates to how health literacy develops throughout the life course and the way healthy settings, such as towns and cities, are considered. It additionally relates to the critical role played by inculcation as a social practice. The habitus of those who value and include regular physical activity is one in which families (or groups of like-minded individuals such as partners, housemates or other social groupings) are active together and involve everyone in social physical activities that can be adapted and sustained throughout life. The overall impression from the recollections and explanations of interviewees is that this routine practice of LTPA is as Giddens (1991) explains, influencing the self-identity of individuals within the family unit, which can also extend into their broader social networks such as partners and friends.

The routine of being physically active reinforces the notion that the enablers and motivators for physical activity as a ‘habit of a lifetime’ are deeply embedded within the family structure, and mirror findings from an Australian intergenerational study that documents gradual significant change through three generations (Banwell et al., 2012). The authors flag that a ‘second revolution is underway’ (p.81) where younger generations are not only exhausted by the toll of work/study and socialising, but are either fatigued or injured by their efforts to excel when they are engaged in physical activity (being more extrinsically motivate to compete than their parents’ generation). The authors suggest that this is because the opportunities and time for leisure are different now for young adults compared to their parent’s generation (Banwell et al.,
Similar to participants in my study, their Gen Y participants describe the effect this has on their leisure time physical activity practices. This seems to have an exhausting effect on those trying to manage an adult life, and further reinforces the importance of acknowledging what I refer to as the Nine R’s of leisure in physical activity planning and promotion. My participants’ experiences of LTPA throughout childhood and adolescence remained with them into young adulthood, even to the extent that they themselves attributed their current levels and types of LTPA to their upbringing, regardless of whether or not it occurred in a locality with abundant or varied leisure opportunities.

The key health behaviour is ingrained habitual practice, developed through the regular practices of family and local community. Of which the enjoyment of physical movement throughout the formative years is a recognisable key ingredient. The combination of inculcation through family practices, the development of an appreciation of and adeptness for physical movement through the school years and the provision of appropriate and accessible neighbourhood characteristics can provide a successful foundation, as seen with a number of participants in my study—such as the sporty family, Tom (IMPI09) and Ainslie (IMPI20). Although inculcation would be more difficult in situations in which the family of origin does not provide such an environment, it is possible that schools, sporting organisations and community youth groups can and do provide the inculcation as experienced by Alice (OMPI17).

7.6 Leading a Horse to Water . . . But What About Making it Drink?

From the outset, I thought that environmental factors such as neighbourhood characteristics would make the most difference (Bauman & Bull, 2007; Calogiuri & Chroni, 2014; Christakis & Fowler, 2007; Swinburn, Egger & Raza, 1999). While the interplay between environmental characteristics and personal motivation to be
physically active is apparent in the findings, the overarching understanding and
expectations of leisure, leisure time and physical activity appear to be central. My research shows that expectations of leisure as an experience change over time and that once people’s working life settles down to become routine, they tend to consider exercising for the maintenance of their own health. Therefore, although my study does not directly investigate causal mechanisms, it does explore many aspects of young people’s lives that relate to their LTPA.

While adolescence is a time for growing independence, young adulthood is a time for experimenting with independence and maturing into the responsibilities of maintaining one’s own health and wellbeing. This resonates with other research findings where young adults are studied (Banwell, Broom, Davies & Dixon, 2012; Uijtdewilligen, Twisk, Chinapaw et al., 2014). The necessity to undergo this experimentation—managing one’s own time, money, energy, relationships, emotions and health—challenges young adults to crystallise and acknowledge their agency as individuals within their community.

I identify a three-way tension between what young adults want, what they need and what they can access. In addressing the core question of what enables and inhibits the LTPA of young adults, the disjunction between what they want and do and what public health experts and local councils say they need and should do is the cold hard reality to be reckoned with. What they do not want, do not need and cannot access is equally clear. As reflected in recent research, they seek pleasure and relaxation, not additional effort and pain from exercise (Segar & Richardson, 2014; Springer, Lamborn & Pollard, 2013). They need supportive structures and appropriate accessible infrastructure for adult play and transport; they do not need to join many different groups just to be healthy or to have to drive long distances.
Compounding the stress in modern life for young adults is the culture of convenience and instant gratification juxtaposed with sites of physical activity (Banwell, Broom, Davies and Dixon, 2012; Dixon & Broom, 2007; Olstad, Goonewardene, McCargar & Raine, 2014). Energy-dense food options at the cafés in swimming complexes, for example, present an easy opportunity to replace the energy expended at the swim session. On another level altogether, socialising over wine and beer is overtly advertised at sports clubs and fitness centres, and some public bars where nightclub dancing occurs offer a heady combination of alcohol, counter meals, gambling and sexualised entertainment alongside the opportunity to dance and have fun. As some of the photographs taken for the environmental audits show, this juxtaposition sends mixed messages to people using these facilities: ‘Be active and consume energy-dense, low-nutrient food and drink’. While this may merely exemplify a modern social reality, it also signals a space where causes and opportunities operate in similar places and times and does little to clarify the issue of what really constitutes a healthy lifestyle.

It is not surprising that the novel and the accessible attract young adults. The contrast between the ‘free-range’ idyll of childhood so prominent in rural and outer-metropolitan interviews and the attraction of the inner-city facilities for young adults invites special discussion. Interviewees described the attraction as either being one of convenience (for work or study) or being able to access their preferences for facilities that were more exciting than those close by and not needing a car once they had arrived: the city nightclubs, South Bank parkland, cafés, bars and restaurants. The bustling city with its array of higher education, public transport and employment options attracts domestic and international students to live in the inner-city areas. However, inner-metropolitan participants not raised in the South Brisbane study area implied that their residency there was temporary. Most in this category were there for specific types of
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work, study or a working holiday, and attracted to the area for its energetic vibe, walkability and employment options. In short, they were seeking to have their desires for ready access to different, and hopefully more exciting, opportunities for pleasure met.

The young adults in my study sent a clear message—they wanted and needed time and space for their mental health. Campaigns to promote physical activity do well when foregrounding the more immediate mental health benefits of being active (such as helping to manage stress or depression, or achieving relaxation), in conjunction with the associated physical benefits of risk reduction for cardiovascular disease, diabetes or some cancers. Although these messages still may not resonate with young adults until they are at least in their mid-20s, they will be however, more open to the health message if they have had positive experiences of being physically active in their youth. Nevertheless, it is possible to gain the necessary capacity to be physically active in adulthood through the support of others such as friends and family, community groups and organised support systems (e.g. workplace fitness sessions and personal trainers). Public health campaigns need to focus on the benefits of being moderately physically active even when lacking energy—showing how it can be social, as well as refreshing and relaxing. Given the inherently personal nature of enjoyment for physical activity, it is more important to help people to have many early experiences of moving with confidence and competence in life; so they can learn how to understand or appreciate the importance of being physically active from an early age and to come to prioritise physical activity within daily life.

While the individuals and groups in this project are not representative of the general young adult population throughout Australia, their experiences, situations and viewpoints provide valuable detailed perspectives. They are a sample of 61 young
adults aged 18-30 years from rural, outer-metropolitan and inner-metropolitan areas; are in sedentary employment or study, and for the most part do not have dependent children. As such, their perspectives point to directions for future research design and can guide action for the provision of services and facilities that promote physical activity through families and organisational structures. Future research design for LTPA should explore connections between multiple facets and where possible be longitudinal and intergenerational. Frameworks such as the Socio-Ecological Model are very useful in this regard. An outline of recommendations for future research and action is in Chapter 8.

If the main barrier to young adults being physically active is that they do not really enjoy it, then helping them to find pleasure in being active, and to find flow (and enjoy the experience of moving with confidence and competence or skill) is key (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Dewar et al., 2014; Singhal & Siddhu, 2014; Springer, Lamborn & Pollard, 2013; Telford et al., 2013; Whitehead, 2010). While exploring the mechanisms to achieve this are outside of the scope of this research project, my findings point to the development of physical literacy through schooling, community groups and familial networks.

An additional barrier to their physical activity is that they do not feel it is necessary for them at their time of life. Their spare time is their own for resting, not being active, a concept gaining traction in the area of physical activity and other health research areas (Banwell et al., 2012; Davies, 2011; Dixon et al., 2007; Springer, Lamborn & Pollard, 2013). Because people experience leisure time as their own time, they define as their own: to do with as they please, a time in which to feel they are being their true selves, as opposed to any other role or obligation of daily life.
On the balance of the literature and findings from my study, it is evident that what really influences the LTPA of young adults is the meaning that they make out of leisure experiences and being physically active. What they do for physical activity relates to the sensory qualities inherent in each experience (feeling safe, rested, pleased, accepted or connected) and to the meaning made from that experience. This is especially so for those who do not enjoy being active and resist it in almost all aspects of their lives. Therefore, LTPA is a two-sided experience: one side is about using time to replenish the energy used each day to earn a living or to function from day to day, and the other side is about being active—moving one’s body—for fun and good health.

7.7 Summary

Quite naturally, different features influence each individual’s leisure and physical activity preferences and habits. This variation challenges the way LTPA is currently conceptualised in health research, where leisure time and physical activity are combined in a very broad category that does not necessarily correspond with the understandings of the participants being studied.

Based on a mix of data from rural and urban areas, I found that the concepts of leisure and physical activity are actually incompatible health behaviours, as individuals typically do not equate one with the other. The mismatch clouds the conversation about physical activity for health and wellbeing. If people are to understand and appreciate physical activity, it seems more logical that we should instead be talking about helping people understand and enjoy physical movement.

Overall, I argue that it is unhelpful for health promotion campaigns to consider the concepts of physical activity and leisure together. Rather, it would be more effective to work with the understanding that physical activity is beneficial for maintaining health and wellbeing and can be an enjoyable experience, but frame it as a dedicated time for
health maintenance, either in groups or individually. The cultivation of a culture of physical activity for lifelong health and wellbeing runs parallel to this idea of health maintenance time and requires a concentration of effort to develop physical literacy through formal schooling, familial situations and organised social groups. In so doing, it would be tapping into a ‘culture’ of enjoying moving the human body and appreciating movement as a contributor to health and wellbeing that ideally continues throughout the life course.
Chapter 8: Implications

The challenge for many studies is to translate the findings into terms that can inform action within public health (Bauman et al., 2012). The overarching implication of my research findings is the reconsideration of how young adults come to appreciate the social and physical benefits of regular physical activity enough to prioritise it, or normalise it as a daily habit. This is about how people come to make positive attachments with physical activity at home, at school and in the broader community. It involves how they come to appreciate being physically active for the maintenance of their own health; and how they find enjoyable physical activities that suit their disposition to participate in. In taking this dual approach to the issue of inactivity, the implications of my findings address the development of a positive emotional attachment to being physically active and exposure to a broad range of physical activities during youth and early adulthood. I expect that this dual approach can help nurture a more health-enhancing approach to lifelong physical activity and impact on the overall health outcomes of young adults.

Action within public health can come in the form of strengthened partnerships between government and community agencies and organised groups involved with young people e.g., familial, educational and recreational settings. This would affect how health promotion, school settings, teacher education and social groups each formulate their role in the process of encouraging and normalising physical activity.

Given the stage of life and the focus on sensation seeking among those aged 18–24 years, there is a compelling argument for change. Primarily, we need to change our expectations of this age group as they make the transition into adulthood and find ways to integrate mechanisms that can assist them to access the quality experiences that they
want and need. Second, we need to reconsider how young people are inculcated to appreciate and enjoy being physically active.

It makes sense to approach the promotion of physical activity and health maintenance from the specific perspective of young adults—acknowledging their mindset and expectations as by-products of their life stage as well as of their individual circumstances. By drawing attention to the issues of access and preference faced by young adults in both rural and urban locations, my research signals the need for a change: not just in the attitude of local governments to planning for physical activity for this age group, but also in the way physical activity behaviours are presented to the general public in health promotion campaigns. The knowledge that area disadvantage hampers participation in active forms of recreation suggests the need for strong leadership from rural councils, and for community and commercial providers to work closely together as networks of neighbouring towns to build capacity in their region. By sharing ideas and developing new facilities and services, they will be better able to meet the needs of their constituents.

In many ways, the implications of my research echo those offered in systematic reviews of physical activity interventions (Cleland et al., 2012; Hoehner et al., 2008; Kahn et al., 2002). These reviews show that changing physical activity behaviours necessarily requires individuals to change. However, both the health behaviour literature and my research suggest that this would be more effective if done at a group level and with social values and community support underpinning it. Behavioural change is both an individual endeavour and a social, cultural, policy and environmental endeavour. Societal values need to honour and preference the place of physical activity in the workplace, transport, recreation and health maintenance, and demonstrate this through policies and practices (including interventions) underpinned by sound theoretical
frameworks. Additional surveillance or epidemiological studies in this area would further corroborate these research findings.

8.1 Reframing How Physical Activity Is Understood and Prioritised

Given the circumstances that foster an understanding and appreciation of physical activity in childhood and youth have a bearing on the emotional connection with physical activity in early adulthood; it is important to reconsider the development of this formative relationship with being active. Doing so has the potential to alter the way people prioritise it as they interact with opportunities for physical activity as young adults.

Creating an environment conducive to valuing physical activity requires a few key elements. These elements are about facilitating enjoyable experiences of physical activity during youth: providing a variety of well-resourced opportunities for being active; catering for different interests; and offering activities at appropriate times of the day for the season. Depending on the particular setting, this may require the redesign of social and learning spaces to develop physical literacy during the years of formal schooling. It has the potential to influence the levels of engagement in different forms of physical activity, which could in turn foster a culture in which moving freely is commonplace and physical movement is preferred. Young people should experience physical activity in a positive light throughout their school years and come to appreciate it as an enjoyable everyday experience. This would be effective and sustainable if it included families and carers within a whole-of-school approach.

Whilst the issue is indeed complicated by the busyness of family life (Strazdins, 2008; Banwell, Broom, Davies & Dixon, 2012), it is nonetheless important for school communities to be as supportive as possible of the developing physical activity as a lifelong habit.
8.1.1 Recommendation 1

Education systems can support teachers and school communities to develop the physical literacy of students and staff. As well as developing their own appreciation of a wider range of physical activities, teachers need curriculum support to focus initially on the way their school community values the PE components of the HPE curriculum area. This will help schools foster positive experiences of being physically active that are social and enjoyable and help children develop an appreciation of physical movement as a natural part of everyday practice. The preparation of teachers at universities can also develop the physical literacy of its pre-service teachers, and explicitly include approaches to the teaching of HPE that develop physical literacy in their students. In particular:

- Each primary school should have a qualified HPE specialist teacher to work with classroom teachers to deliver curriculum that develops the physical literacy and requisite health literacy.

- To support families in their development of physical literacy within the home, and staff at schools:
  - Schools can involve staff, families and carers in related school community events, such as regular walking, running or cycling groups; weekly classes in yoga, Pilates, martial arts and CrossFit (run by local community groups at the school); health expos for Health & Physical Education Week; Jump Rope for Heart; and Chief Minister or Premier’s physical activity challenge.

- School systems can provide ongoing professional support for teachers in HPE so that they are increasingly confident and skilled to enact the HPE
curriculum to full effect. As some generalist primary schoolteachers may not have the requisite physical literacy themselves, their employer should support them develop the skills and confidence to do so. This can be through mentoring with colleagues or specific professional learning events.

- Teacher training programs at universities can require primary pre-service teachers to undertake pedagogy content knowledge subjects in HPE, and offer a specialisation in the area. Beginning teachers should be conversant with teaching the fundamental movement skills, games and a full range of activities required for developing a child’s physical literacy in concert with the curriculum (Whitehead, 2010).

8.1.2 Recommendation 2

With support from local and state/territory government, local branches of organisations, such as the YMCA and YWCA, can work with families and assist them to develop physical competence and find activities that they enjoy together. In doing so, they would help them develop sustainable practices for lifelong physical activity.

Ideally, this would involve links between families and their local council, community groups, school community, workplaces, places of worship etc., and would promote the inculcation of physical activity in family settings. As a commitment to the shared responsibility between community partners, this would happen as a joint initiative between state/territory government, families, community organisations and schools. It would need to include people willing to be advocates or champions of physical activity to mentor or guide groups with relatively flat organisational structures. To ensure its sustainability as a public health initiative, health departments at the state or territory level would need to provide administrative support to participating local councils and agencies.
8.2 Reframing the Promotion of physical Activity. Rather than solely targeting individuals with health promotion messages about LTPA, there can be support for the groups in which young adults are already involved to include more physically active pursuits within their programs. In doing so, they can be promoting physical activity as a natural part of social groups. Combining the time allocated to physical activity for health maintenance with a pre-existing commitment would provide the companionship and sense of safety that young adult’s desire, and that acts as a motivator for them to be or stay active. For example, church youth groups may opt to have outdoor barbeques with social walks or games of frisbee, cricket, bocce, tennis or swimming. Workplaces and other groups may decide to enter teams in regular local events such as charity fun runs or cycle events, and have regular training sessions to prepare (e.g., fun runs, walks, cycling, triathlon, surf lifesaving and mountain biking), or facilitate lunch time sessions of walking, jogging, Zumba, Boxercise, CrossFit, Pilates or yoga.

In suggesting these changes, it is important to consider the role of communities as places where the promotion of physical literacy can have a strong influence throughout the life course. Communities that work with individuals from early childhood through to older age can contribute greatly to developing appropriate movement skills and health knowledge to foster the confidence and competence required for pleasurable life-enhancing experiences of physical activity. Settings such as families, early learning centres, primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions, workplaces, community centres and community organisations can all be advocates for physical activity through the opportunities they offer and the ways they prioritise them. In this way, the places where people live, work and play throughout their lives will be
helping to normalise physical movement in everyday activities and help people achieve the recommended levels of physical activity for optimal health.

8.2.1 Recommendation 3

Given the influence of social relationships on participation in leisure time physical activity, it is important for local agencies and governments to liaise with parents, especially new parents, and find physical activities they can enjoy doing with their children. This may be as a part of the maternal and child health nurse contact brief or antenatal classes, as well as in early learning and childcare centres, preschool and primary school settings.

For a setting like an early learning centre, this would primarily be the responsibility of the centre manager to make initial contact with local agencies. Centre managers can also work with the community to ensure that the activities or suggestions integrate into their facility in a way that is meaningful for the community members. Although many centres already involve families in their approach to providing a rich learning environment, the conscious inclusion of information about the importance of family oriented physical activity would help to develop the physical and health literacy of children and their carers; and compliment other initiatives in the broader community. The initiative can ideally have a flow-on effect into local clubs, associations and especially high school settings where parents historically have lesser involvement in the day-to-day schooling of their children.

8.2.2 Recommendation 4

For older youth, involve schools and community agencies in the promotion of regular social physical activity that is social, free or low cost, enjoyable, and varied (not mainly ‘traditional exercise’) and oriented to senior secondary school students and young adults. The management of this can be by schools and community
organisations/centres with the support of the broader school networks/systems. The involvement of schoolteachers of all subject areas can help avoid the reproduction of a mainstream sport focus to physical literacy that may occur if managed solely by HPE teachers and sports officers in the education departments.

8.3 Reframing the Opportunities for Physical Activity. As they transition from adolescence to adulthood, and begin to enjoy the freedom that it generally entails, young adults are constrained by low incomes, transport problems and new commitments. Many of the age-appropriate opportunities they want to access for physical activity, such as contemporary forms of dancing (e.g., nightclub or hip hop), fitness centres, are disappointingly unavailable where they live, particularly so for young adults in the rural and some outer-metropolitan areas. To acknowledge the social and physical importance of this pursuit, businesses and council in their local areas need to provide safer venues and more options for social dancing and live music. Not only will this will help reduce the effects of area disadvantage experienced in rural communities, but it will also strengthen social capital within the community.

8.3.1 Recommendation 5

With assistance from local and regional agencies and guided by young adults from the area, rural communities can develop strategies to enhance physical activity opportunities for their young adults, especially dance venues and fitness centres. This may include developing a pilot community project that experiments with a range of solutions to the most pressing issues in their area. Local councils can consider how they plan for a wide range of active leisure and transport options; proactively consult with young people to find out what they would like to prioritise for leisure options, and what they are willing to contribute to ensure it happens.
To ensure sustainability in rural communities, a well-considered approach to public transport is essential. Access to low cost transport options would help to address the area disadvantage experienced by rural youth and young adults, and help link young people to more opportunities in their region.

8.3.2 Recommendation 6

Local councils can encourage and support community groups (such as youth or community centres and church groups) to utilise physical activity as a regular part of their programs. Suggestions include a variety of gentle, moderate and vigorous levels of activity, as well as sessions involving strength and conditioning, and mindfulness to encourage as much participation as possible, such as walking, running or cycling groups, group fitness sessions and social sporting teams in local competitions or events. It is possible to integrate these into programs that are more sedentary as well as offer them as active living programs in their own right. There should be particular attention given to those who lack confidence in their own skills or who lack the social support to sustain their involvement. As well as contributing to the health and wellbeing of its members from the local community, this can be under the umbrella of community organisations helping achieve the milestones or indicators for their jurisdiction towards achieving ‘liveable city’ status.

8.4 Summary

Despite the growing body of scholarship about LTPA, there is much more work to do to understand fully the implications of two aspects: affective responses and area differences influencing participation in physical activity. Feeling positive about being physically active is a strong motivator for actually being active and is critical for people sustaining physical activity as a habit to last their lifetime. This is especially so when they are faced with difficult circumstances or area disadvantage.
My research leads me to conclude that, rather than enumerating the amount and type of physical activity people should be doing for HEPA, the key to sustainable effective promotion of physical activity is to focus on fostering the enjoyment of it and access to appropriate opportunities, and with that, developing the psychosocial and movement skills to do so. Enjoying physical activity is about what the sensory experience of moving freely and with confidence means for each person. This is really about individuals being autonomous and influences them making it their preference.
Appendices
## Appendix A: Socio-demographic data tables

Table A.1

*Population, geographic mobility and disadvantage for the study sites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*</th>
<th>SLA of Kolan (Rural)</th>
<th>SLA of Logan (OM)</th>
<th>SLA of Brisbane (IM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated resident population &amp; % of Queensland population&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5,438 (0.1%)</td>
<td>61,560 (1.4%)</td>
<td>20,397 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin &amp; % of total population&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>110 (2.4%)</td>
<td>1,294 (2.5%)</td>
<td>322 (1.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living elsewhere five yrs previously&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People born overseas&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of usual residents in most disadvantaged quintile&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of usual residents in least disadvantaged quintile&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* based on Statistical Local Area (SLA) categories and data obtained from the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, Queensland Treasury; the ABS 2006 Census and other ABS data (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007c, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007g, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011a, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011b, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011c)

<sup>1</sup> As at 30 June 2010

<sup>2</sup> At the time of the 2006 Census

<sup>3</sup> In 2009

<sup>4</sup> In the June quarter 2011

<sup>5</sup> In the 12 months ending 30 September 2011

<sup>6</sup> In 2005-06

<sup>7</sup> In 2008-09 period
Time and Transitions

Table A.2

*Education, disability and volunteering of the study sites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators of disadvantage*</th>
<th>SLA of Kolan (Rural)</th>
<th>SLA of Logan (OM)</th>
<th>SLA of Brisbane (IM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of students attending a school in a Govt school(^1)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% students attending a school in a non-Govt school(^3)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of people aged over 15rs had a post-school qualification(^2)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of people in need of assistance with a profound or severe disability(^2)</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of people aged over 15yrs who were volunteers(^2)</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of people over 15yrs earning less than $400 per wk(^2)</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*based on Statistical Local Area (SLA) categories and data obtained from the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, Queensland Treasury; the ABS 2006 Census and other ABS data (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007c, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007g, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011a, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011b, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011c)*

\(^1\) As at 30 June 2010

\(^2\) At the time of the 2006 Census

\(^3\) In 2009

\(^4\) In the June quarter 2011

\(^5\) In the 12 months ending 30 September 2011

\(^6\) In 2005-06

\(^7\) In 2008-09 period
### Table A.3

**Household composition, income, housing affordability, education, employment and migration data for the study sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SLA of Kolan (Rural)</th>
<th>SLA of Logan (OM)</th>
<th>SLA of Brisbane (IM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median age of persons</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average household size</strong></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median individual income ($/weekly)</strong></td>
<td>$307</td>
<td>$399</td>
<td>$550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median family income ($/weekly)</strong></td>
<td>$669</td>
<td>$1,019</td>
<td>$1,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median household income ($/weekly)</strong></td>
<td>$535</td>
<td>$782</td>
<td>$1,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median rent ($/weekly)</strong></td>
<td>$120 (=22.5% of median household income $535)</td>
<td>$175 (=22% of median household income $782)</td>
<td>$310 (=27.5% of median household income $1,126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median housing loan repayment ($/monthly)</strong></td>
<td>$700</td>
<td>$1,083</td>
<td>$1,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education level(a) (based on place of enumeration)</strong></td>
<td>Postgraduate Degree 0.06% Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate 0.06% Bachelor Degree 0.57% Advanced Diploma and Diploma 0.46% Certificate Level 1.91%</td>
<td>Postgraduate Degree 0.06% Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate 0.03% Bachelor Degree 0.44% Advanced Diploma and Diploma 0.49% Certificate Level 1.83%</td>
<td>Postgraduate Degree 1.9% Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate 0.48% Bachelor Degree 4.8% Advanced Diploma and Diploma 1.75% Certificate Level 2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment status(a) (based on place of enumeration)</strong></td>
<td>Employed, worked full-time (b) 3% Employed, worked part-time 2.15% Employed, away from work(c) 0.4% Unemployed, looking for work 0.55%</td>
<td>Employed, worked full-time (b) 3.4% Employed, worked part-time 1.45% Employed, away from work(c) 0.44% Unemployed, looking for work 0.44%</td>
<td>Employed, worked full-time (b) 8.3% Employed, worked part-time 3.5% Employed, away from work(c) 1% Unemployed, looking for work 0.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Migration (based on place of enumeration)</strong></td>
<td>Lived at same address 1 year ago(g) 12.56% Lived at different address 1 year ago(g) 3.3% Lived at same address 5 years ago(h) 97.76% Lived at different address 5 years ago(h) 7%</td>
<td>Lived at same address 1 year ago(g) 8.9% Lived at different address 1 year ago(g) 2.7% Lived at same address 5 years ago(h) 5% Lived at different address 5 years ago(h) 5.8%</td>
<td>Lived at same address 1 year ago(g) 13.6% Lived at different address 1 year ago(g) 8.3% Lived at same address 5 years ago(h) 6.65% Lived at different address 5 years ago(h) 14.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Time and Transitions

Data sourced from:


(a) Applicable to persons aged 15 years and over.
(b) ‘Employed, worked full-time’ is defined as having worked 35 hours or more in all jobs during the week prior to Census Night.
(c) Comprises employed persons who did not work any hours in the week prior to Census Night and employed persons who did not state their hours worked.

(g) Excludes persons less than 1 year of age.
(h) Excludes persons less than 5 years of age.
Table A.4: Economic performance of the study sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Performance*</th>
<th>SLA of Kolan (Rural)</th>
<th>SLA of Logan (OM)</th>
<th>SLA of Brisbane (IM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoothed unemployment rate(^4)</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest industry of employment for usual residents with % of region's employed workforce(^2)</td>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; 28.1% of the employed workforce</td>
<td>Manufacturing; 15.5% of the employed workforce</td>
<td>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; 12.6% of the employed workforce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on Statistical Local Area (SLA) categories and data obtained from the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, Queensland Treasury; the ABS 2006 Census and other ABS data (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007g, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007c, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011a, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011b, Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2011c)

1 As at 30 June 2010

2 At the time of the 2006 Census

3 In 2009

4 In the June quarter 2011

5 In the 12 months ending 30 September 2011

6 In 2005-06

7 In 2008-09 period
Table A.5: Income of participants by study site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly income range*</th>
<th>% Rural participants (n=18**)</th>
<th>% OM participants (n=19**)</th>
<th>% IM participants (n=20)</th>
<th>Total (n=58)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1,300 - $1,599</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5% (n=1)</td>
<td>20% (n=4)</td>
<td>9% (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000 - $1,299</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10% (n=2)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>3% (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$800 - $999</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15% (n=3)</td>
<td>10% (n=2)</td>
<td>9% (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600 - $799</td>
<td>22% (n=4)</td>
<td>30% (n=6)</td>
<td>25% (n=5)</td>
<td>26% (n=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400 - $599</td>
<td>33% (n=6)</td>
<td>10% (n=2)</td>
<td>5% (n=1)</td>
<td>16% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250 - $399</td>
<td>22% (n=4)</td>
<td>10% (n=2)</td>
<td>10% (n=2)</td>
<td>12% (n=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150 - $249</td>
<td>11% (n=2)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>15% (n=3)</td>
<td>9% (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1 - $149</td>
<td>6% (n=1)</td>
<td>10% (n=2)</td>
<td>5% (n=1)</td>
<td>6% (n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil income</td>
<td>6% (n=1)</td>
<td>5% (n=1)</td>
<td>10% (n=2)</td>
<td>6% (n=4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Income ranges as per ABS guide: total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income you usually receive

**Participants working reduced hours due to child caring responsibilities were excluded for this analysis (Rural area - RPI06 worked part time and earned a total of $250 - $399, RPI18 not in paid employment and earned $250 - $399; OM area - OMPI01 not in paid employment and earned $400 - $599)
Appendix B: Factors influencing the LTPA practices of young adults

*Figure B.1.* Summary of factors influencing the LTPA practices of young adults.
Time and Transitions

Figure B.2. Outline of how young adults understand leisure and LTPA.
Figure B.3. Outline of inhibitors and enablers for LTPA of young adults.
Appendix C: Supporting data for Findings

Table C.1  
Summary of self-reported spending, issues & financial strategies associated with leisure across all areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported spending</th>
<th>Issues experienced (mainly: cost, effort, identity)</th>
<th>Strategies used to manage issues (mainly: frugality, avoidance, save &amp; splurge, reliance on others to defray)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active leisure</strong></td>
<td>• Personal coaching/training</td>
<td>• Life in the Off-peak lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gym membership; home gymnasium</td>
<td>• take advantage of cheap sessions, venues, options, discount vouchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Team sports (netball, touch footy) – fees, specialist/required clothing, transport</td>
<td>• use concession card holder status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individual activities (running, walking, golf, fishing/spear fishing, athletics, wrestling, motor biking, horse riding, aquatics - swimming, surfing, water skiing – (PPE, transport, fees, specialist/technical clothing)</td>
<td>• text rather than phone on mobile phones &amp; phone plan with cheapest texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dancing (nightclubbing)</td>
<td>• use international phone cards to call overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inactive leisure</strong></td>
<td>• Electronic games (Wii, computer, online)</td>
<td>• uses savings for sporadic splurge spending (RPI17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• TVV, movies</td>
<td>• avoidance of exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Music – recorded &amp; live music (concerts, festivals)</td>
<td>• compromise on costs &amp; comfort (OMPI04) and shares sport rego fees with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Body adornment (tattoos, piercings)</td>
<td>• parents off set/subsidise living costs esp. phone &amp; internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Travel, theme parks &amp; attractions</td>
<td>• borrow items from friends, family &amp; public services e.g., libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• mobile phone</td>
<td>• acquire items as gifts, inherit or hand-me-downs esp. computers, TVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• internet</td>
<td>• buy second hand items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• motorised transport (fuel &amp; maintenance)</td>
<td>• prioritise spending because planning for future (baby OMPI09 &amp; buying house OMPI03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• alcohol</td>
<td>• lots of restraint with $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• illicit drugs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Time and Transitions

#### Additional comments

**Common costs associated with:**
- transport
- food and drink – eating out, alcohol
- night clubbing
- movies (DVD, cinema)
- some spending between 50-90% of weekly income on their leisure (esp. if living at home) – mixture active and inactive e.g., personal entertainment (nightclubbing) & personal communication (internet & mobile phone)

**Enablers for spending money on leisure (own and others):**
- living arrangements that absorb or subside the basic living costs of a young adult e.g.
  - living at home with parents and parents who pay for base costs
  - group/share house where living expenses and resources are shared
  - live in close proximity to leisure options (use active or public transport more and reduce transport costs)

**Additional comments**

- conscious frugality
- save then splurge attitude
- avoiding opportunity in order to not spend
- consciously opted for free leisure because of low income
- other people offsetting/defraying costs (parents, partner, friends)

---

*doesn’t take into account the hidden costs (financial & otherwise) & flow-on effects involved when things go wrong e.g., Claudia’s friend with drink spiking and rape whilst nightclubbing in inner city Brisbane*
### Table C.2

*Key participant examples of the impact of disruptive life events on participation in LTPA.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area and participant</th>
<th>disruptive life event</th>
<th>+ve impact on LTPA</th>
<th>-ve impact on LTPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilly (18yo, RPI17)</td>
<td>In her mid-teens her parents moved the family around a lot managing petrol stations. (Unpopular decision with Melissa.) Finished education at end year 10.</td>
<td>Used computer 8-9 hrs per day to maintain contact with family &amp; friends (MSN, MySpace etc) Felt isolated Affected health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland (18yo, RPI19)</td>
<td>Separation of his parents during his childhood Single child living with mother Moved from farm to one acre house block Disrupted school experiences - 4 diff schools overall Lived between two towns (and parents) whilst in primary school and attended two different PS, attended local high school in Childers (yrs 8-10) but picked on for being of German descent. Moved to Gin Gin and attended local high school for yrs 11-12.</td>
<td>Some archery after school hours (enjoyed own space &amp; activity interests)</td>
<td>developed a mistrust of teachers in early high school begrudgingly played football (disliked it and only did it to fit in with peers) preferred to play hacky sack (foot sack) but not popular with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan (19yo, RPI02)</td>
<td>In trouble with police as teenager Unsettled high schooling (changed schools twice during yr 11); didn’t like school Left school during yr 11 Began but didn’t complete panel beating apprenticeship</td>
<td>Hang out with mates drinking, smoking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara (27yo, RPI04)</td>
<td>Upheaval as a 12yo when her family moved to Colombia for missionary work; she was unwilling to move &amp; forced to go moved from 600acre farm to small house in very big city felt didn’t fit in with other teenagers in foreign country and big city</td>
<td>Learned to play soccer &amp; basketball (popular sports in Colombia) despite hating sports Shoots hoops at community local basketball court as adult Finds solace in beach activities; meditates on issues whilst walking on beach</td>
<td>Developed methods of escape whilst in Colombia (eg computer, listening to music, reading, guitar),</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Time and Transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OM</th>
<th>disruptive life event</th>
<th>+ve Impact on LTPA</th>
<th>-ve Impact on LTPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Rachel (18yo, OMPI20) | Family moved around a lot; 10-12 different schools; Australia-USA-Australia  
Moved from Australia to USA at 7yo, then Texas, USA to Beenleigh, Australia at 15yo  
Felt pressured in yr 11 for being ‘exotic’ – Texan with strong accent;  
Then moved schools lots - 3 high schools in 2yrs (yr 11-12)  
Left home at 17yo, lives alone in Beenleigh in emergency housing  
Death of special grandmother affected her outlook on life (direction & focus) | Finds solace in beach activities          | Summer heat in Beenleigh influences whether she walks to public transport or gets taxi  
Indoor air conditioned schooling in Texas, USA  
Finds security & sanctuary in church activities (none include PA) – no pressure |
| Eddie (19yo, OMPI07) | Parents divorced when he was teenager & lived with mum in Cairns until mid-teens  
Moved to Gin Gin to live with dad and school for yr 11-12  
Moved out of home during yr 12 (fights with dad);  
lots of drinking (started in HS), got into trouble;  
lost license drink driving;  
fathered a child in Bundaberg (no contact)  
lots of financial debt  
moved to new job in Beenleigh |                                             | Gained 20kgs since leaving school (drinking and no PA)  
Reliance on screen based entertainment & alcohol for leisure  
Lacks routine & support network in Beenleigh |
| Alice (30yo, OMPI17) | Left home at 17yo  
Unsettled & unhappy childhood and adolescence  
Parents moved churches & schools lots (2PS and 3HS) – unsettled her as child  
Oldest of five children; domineering & manipulative mother & weak father; felt disliked by mother | Immersed self in extra-curricular sport  
Met current husband through church group and took up Tae Kwon Do, rollerblading, bike riding, gym | - |
## Time and Transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IM</th>
<th>Disruptive Life Event</th>
<th>+ve Impact on LTPA</th>
<th>-ve Impact on LTPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angie (32yo, IMPI04)</td>
<td>Parents divorced when teenager; experienced grief &amp; trauma from family breakup&lt;br&gt;Moved in with mother &amp; mother’s lesbian partner&lt;br&gt;Transition to university lonely &amp; difficult – too much alcohol, partying &amp; nightclubbing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences depression when has too much free time&lt;br&gt;Father was the one into exercise and mother more into art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy (30yo, IMPI14)</td>
<td>Parents divorced when teenager and moved in with mother &amp; mother’s lesbian partner&lt;br&gt;Lived ‘secret life’: Social at school but didn’t invite school friends home (worried about reactions of peers to her lesbian mother)&lt;br&gt;In adulthood – some boring jobs and partners with depression</td>
<td>Learned the value of PA for keeping fit for interesting work (landscaping) and focused on own health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom (28yo, IMPI09)</td>
<td>Post school – lived in Noosa, QLD – fun but limiting for work &amp; leisure activities (not a beach person); just partied and played soccer; lost direction</td>
<td>Played lots of soccer</td>
<td>Drank lots of alcohol, partied hard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dislocation caused by either:
- Family breakdown (usually divorce of parents), or
- Moving out of the area (either because of divorced parents or parents relocating for work)

Common elements:
- Disruption to friendships (loss of connections)
- Increase in screen time and decrease in PA time.

Surprise findings:
- Access to opportunities for extra-curricular activities (physical or otherwise) provide outlets for personal expression when life is difficult and that continue on into adulthood

Result remained as a deep sense of no longer belonging in a community (social groups, and physical spaces and places). Links to the overall importance of social connections for leisure expressed by participants.
Table C.3

Different categories of costs for sample active and sedentary leisure pursuits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of activity</th>
<th>Leisure activity</th>
<th>Goods</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Transport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inactive or low physical activity</td>
<td>general socialising</td>
<td>Food, Beverages</td>
<td>Mobile phone</td>
<td>Cafes, restaurants, Nightclubs</td>
<td>motor vehicle, bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>music (Listening or playing)</td>
<td>Musical equipment</td>
<td>Youth groups</td>
<td>Church youth centres, home</td>
<td>motor vehicle, parking fees, public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Movies (cinema or home)</td>
<td>DVDs, DVD players</td>
<td>Movie rental &amp; purchasing outlets,</td>
<td>Movie cinema, homes, community spaces /halls</td>
<td>motor vehicle, parking fees, taxi, public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>team sport</td>
<td>Specialist sports equipment, team &amp; activity specific clothing</td>
<td>Community groups – membership of local sports club (player registration fees),</td>
<td>Recreation / leisure centre (bowling, tennis), weekly playing fee</td>
<td>motor vehicle, bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the gym</td>
<td>Specific clothing – gym clothes Home gym equipment</td>
<td>Fitness instructor Personal trainer</td>
<td>Public exercise stations, Fitness centres</td>
<td></td>
<td>motor vehicle, bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogging / running</td>
<td>Activity specific clothing, portable music playing device</td>
<td>Athletics coach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Open green spaces, footpaths, shared paths, athletics tracks, Playing fields</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D: Gendered preferences for leisure

#### Summary of gendered leisure pursuits from the perspective of young adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leisure pursuits for this area and age group</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RFG01 &amp; 02</td>
<td></td>
<td>OMFG01 &amp; 02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVDs with friends</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Drinking *</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaoke</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Music festivals (alcohol and drugs)</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going out for dinner</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Sports general (tennis, footy, basketball) Running, walking, gym classes (&amp; personal trainers)</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls night</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Clubbing</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video games (own and group games eg Net festing) – Play Station and TVs</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Going to the horse races (dress up; alcohol; betting; social event)</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paintballing</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Casual Sex (‘prostitution’)</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving/riding</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Sing Star</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending time with mates</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church group activities</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Coffee * (and shopping) *</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Phone and text</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing musical instruments – jamming</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Out to dinner</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies (cinema)</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Movies (cinema, in park – free family, video shops nearby)</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Touch football</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity 1</td>
<td>Activity 2</td>
<td>Activity 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shooting - on farms</td>
<td>Gaming consoles (war games; PS2&amp;3; Xbox; iPod; computer)</td>
<td>☺</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Gin Gin show</td>
<td>Punting</td>
<td>☺</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tinkering - working on transport (fixing cars and bikes), fixing sail boats</td>
<td>Drugs (whilst clubbing or at a party)</td>
<td>☺</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>BMX</td>
<td>☺</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>Fishing (spear fishing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bike riding (mountain bike) Motorcycle riding</td>
<td>Meeting friends at home – BBQ, drinking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equestrian</td>
<td>Watching TV – sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medieval Association (The Society for Creative Anachronism, SCA)</td>
<td>Skate park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sword fighting, Archery</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>Pub (poker, pool competitions, alcohol)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sailing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
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Appendix E: Participant interview questions

Interview questions

Aim: to explore psychosocial factors associated with participation in both physically inactive and active leisure pursuits using the categories of:

- Understandings of leisure
- Experiences of leisure (leisure habits and particularly levels of physical activity)
- Attitudes to leisure (particularly to physical activity in leisure)
- Consumption of commodities related to the leisure experience

Length: between 60-90 minutes

Introduction: use information from the questionnaire to clarify with the interviewee

Interview script:

Thanks for participating in the focus group and completing the questionnaire name of participant. Do you have any questions or comments arising from either of them?

Now just to summarise a bit about yourself name of interviewee, you are age years old, live in name of area, and currently work/study/training status. Is this correct?

Would you please tell me a little about the sort of work/study/training do you do?

How long have you been doing this kind of work/study/training? Do you enjoy it (why or why not)?

What sorts of things do you do in the time that you’re not at work/study/training?

1. Can you tell me a little more about your history in this area, if you’ve lived anywhere else?
2. Now can you tell me a little about your experiences at school? Did you attend the local school here? Did you enjoy school? What was your favourite and least favourite subjects? Would you say that generally you were physically active at school? Did you play weekend sport or do active things with family or friends outside school hours? Has that changed since leaving school?

As you know, the main focus of this research is the leisure experience of young adults. In your focus group, we discussed a number of things about how leisure was understood and experienced in general by young adults from this area. I’m now after a more
Time and Transitions

individual perspective of leisure and so I’d like now to ask you, name of interviewee, a few questions about your own experiences with leisure in name of area. Is this OK with you?

The first few questions are about how you personally understand and experience leisure.

Understandings of leisure

1. What do you think leisure is? (eg As a chunk or section of time when not at work or study, as way of doing something, an attitude or way of being)
2. Where do you think you have developed this idea of leisure from? (eg upbringing, from watching others around you as an adult, from the opportunities that you have been exposed to as an adult or child)

Attitudes to leisure

3. What do you think leisure is for?
4. Do you feel that you have enough leisure (time, opportunities, experiences)?

Experiences of leisure (leisure habits and particularly levels of physical activity)

5. What sorts of things do you do when you are experiencing leisure (time)? How do you use or spend your leisure time?
6. Have these experiences changed since you were younger? If so, how?
7. Can you give me some examples of leisure pursuits that you currently participate in that you would consider to be physically active? What about some examples of the most common inactive leisure pursuits for you? If you were to divide up the sort of things you do in your leisure into physically active and inactive, approximately what sort of ratio would you give for your division (eg 50/50, 30% active/70% inactive)?
8. Would you like to change any of it? If so, what sort of things would help you to achieve the change? Would you do more of anything or something new that you don’t do now?
9. Do you feel confident in your ability to try new or different leisure pursuits? What would you like to try that would be new to you? Is there anything in particular that would encourage you to try something new for your leisure?

Consumption of commodities related to the leisure experience

Interviewer: I’d like to move on now to the sorts of things you might buy in order to participate in your leisure pursuits.
10. What items or services do you purchase that you use in your leisure? What do you use these items or services for? Are they useful or helpful in achieving your goals for your leisure? How do they help you?

11. Is there anything (goods or services) that you would like to purchase for your leisure that you don’t have already? How and what would these contribute to your leisure experiences?

12. What role, if any, do you think goods or services that can be bought, sold or traded play in your leisure experiences? Do you think they help you be physically active or encourage you to be more sedentary with your leisure? How so?

13. Think of a favourite leisure pursuit that involves lots of physical activity. Can you tell me:
   a. When your involvement in it began and with whom?
   b. Was there anything that you had to pay for or loan in order to become involved? Approximately what were the costs?
   c. How essential to the leisure pursuit were these things? What would have happened if you didn’t have them?
   d. Is there anything that you still want or need to continue participating in the leisure pursuits?

14. Now think of a favourite leisure pursuit that involves very little or no physical activity. Can you tell me:
   a. When your involvement in it began and with whom?
   b. Was there anything that you had to pay for or loan in order to become involved? Approximately what were the costs?
   c. How essential to the leisure pursuit were these things? What would have happened if you didn’t have them?
   d. Is there anything that you still want or need to continue participating in that particular leisure pursuit?

Thank you very much name of participant for participating in this interview. Your contributions to this research are really appreciated by both me and the ANU. If there are any questions or feedback you’d like to provide to myself or the university, please feel free to do so via the contact details provided on the information sheet.
Appendix F: Closed questions

☐ Field code (office use only)

Research Questionnaire

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. It is designed to take approximately five minutes to complete. When answering the questions, please

- Select only one option per question, unless otherwise invited
- Make your selection by putting a cross in the appropriate box
- Please print clearly when required
- Remember that all information will be held in the strictest of confidence and is anonymous.

This questionnaire is used to gather general information about research participants. No names or other identifiers are included.
1. What is your current age in years (at your last birthday)?
   _______ years

2. What is your gender?
   □ Male  □ Female

3. Do you have any dependent children?
   □ Yes  □ No

4. In which country were you born?
   □ Australia
   □ Other (specify) ________________

5. Do you identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
   □ Yes  □ No

6. Do you speak a language other than English at home?
   □ No, just English
   □ Yes (specify) ________________

7. Are you currently:
   □ living alone
   □ living with immediate or extended family
   □ living with a partner or friend (i.e. one other person)
   □ living in a group house
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8. | What is the highest level of schooling you have completed? | □ Year 12 or equivalent  
□ Year 11 or equivalent  
□ Year 10 or equivalent  
□ Year 9 or equivalent  
□ Year 8 or below  
□ Did not go to school |
| 9. | Have you *completed* any educational qualification (including a trade certificate)? | □ No  
□ No, still studying for first qualification  
□ Yes, trade certificate or apprenticeship  
□ Yes, other qualification |
| 10. | What was the highest qualification you have *completed*?  
e.g. Trade Certificate, Bachelor Degree, Associate Diploma, Certificate III, Advanced Diploma | Level of qualification: ___________________________ |
| 11. | Are you currently attending an educational institution?  
• including external and correspondence students | □ Yes  
□ No (go to Q. 13)  
□ Yes, full-time student  
□ Yes, part-time student |
| 12. | What type of educational institution are you attending?  
• including external and correspondence |   |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time and Transitions</th>
<th>301</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Technical or further educational institution (including TAFE Colleges)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ University or other higher educational institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Other educational institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Are you currently employed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Yes □ No (go to Q. 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What is your employment type?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ full-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ casual</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. What is the total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income you usually receive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ <strong>Do not deduct</strong>: tax, superannuation contributions, health insurance, amounts salary sacrificed, or any other automatic deductions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ <strong>Include the following:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ $2,000 or more per week</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>($104,000 or more per year)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ $1,600 - $1,999 per week</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>($83,200 – $103,999 per year)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Pensions/Allowances
- family tax benefit
- parenting payment
- unemployment benefits
- Newstart allowance
- rent assistance
- pensions
- student allowances
- maintenance (child support)
- workers’ compensation
- any other pensions or allowances

### Other income
- interest
- dividends
- rents (exclude operating expenses)
- business/farm income (exclude operating expenses)
- any other income

### Wages/salaries
- Regular overtime
- Commissions and bonuses

Note: Information from this question provides an indication of living standards in different areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Weekly Income</th>
<th>Yearly Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1,300 - $1,599</td>
<td>$67,600 – $83,199</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000 - $1,299</td>
<td>$52,000 – $67,599</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$800 - $999</td>
<td>$41,600 – $51,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600 - $799</td>
<td>$31,200 – $41,599</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400 - $599</td>
<td>$20,800 – $31,199</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250 - $399</td>
<td>$13,000 – $20,799</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150 - $249</td>
<td>$7,800 – $12,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1 - $149</td>
<td>$1 – $7,799</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative income</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

16. How did you hear about this research project?

Word of mouth, newspaper, internet, radio, flyer on a noticeboard, other (specify)
Appendix G: Key informant interview questions

Interview questions:

The purpose of this interview is to find out what council does to assist young adults (without children) living in the suburbs of ______________ for their leisure or recreation. Specifically, what aspects of planning and policy affect young adults and might enhance their quality and quantity of opportunities for physical activity. For the purposes of this study, young adults are defined as 18-30 year olds.

1) From your understanding, what types of leisure or recreational pursuits do young adults participate in here in the _____________ area?

2) What do you believe are the main issues or requirements for their participation in these activities?

3) At the local government level, what focus is there on the recreational or leisure related health and wellbeing needs of the young adult age group?

4) How have you seen the _________________ area change for young adults and what plans for the future are there that relate to this age group?

Thank you for your time and responses.
Appendix H: Focus group questions

Focus group

Aim: to explore the general understanding and experiences of leisure of participating young adults (aged 18-30 years)

Preamble:

- confidentiality (from researcher point of view + participants observing each other’s privacy)
- pencil and notebook for each participant to record ideas during focus session in case you don’t get required opportunity throughout this session (hand any relevant pages in at the end of the session)
- ask any questions throughout the process
- opportunity for each individual to contribute in more depth during their interview
- can sit on floor or on seats
- book in for interviews at the conclusion of the focus group (a thank you gift will be provided after the interview)

Equipment required: butchers paper, fastenings eg masking tape and blue tack, bulldog clips (to attach paper to wall), whiteboard markers, small notebooks and pencils (1 set per participant), recording device, extension cord, sufficient seating and tables for participants and researcher (round table setup preferred)

The following questions explore three main areas for young adults: their understandings of leisure, the typical ways of using leisure time (eg pursuits), and gendered differences and similarities. A series of questions have been devised to guide the researcher and ensure consistency across the six focus groups.

Tips: allow thinking time and silences; avoid jumping in with clarifiers too early

Questions:

Question 1 (about understandings of leisure for young adults)

Understandings of the word ‘leisure’ generally vary for different individuals and within different age groups. What do you think the word ‘leisure’ means for your age group - young adults, (those aged 18-30 years)?

Question 2 (about perceived outcomes of leisure for young adults)

What do think people of your age get out of their leisure time?

Question 3 (about considerations for leisure participation of young adults)

What do you think are the main issues (things they would consider or think about) about leisure that people of your age in this area would have?
Clarifiers for Q3 if necessary:

- are some of the issues more about a sense of the time involved, and the separation between work and other times, who you share it with, what specifically you are doing (type of pursuit/activity), whether you need to spend money in order to do things in leisure time

- or are the considerations more about the quality of that time or activity eg enjoyable, no duty/responsibility involved,

- is it something that you are conscious of, that you’re actually ‘at leisure’, ‘doing something for leisure’, or ‘having a leisure experience’

- what about issues to do with access to facilities, equipment, coaching, services (internet, training etc)

**Question 4** (about the main leisure pursuits of young adults)

In general, what would you say are the main things young adults do in their leisure time? (KM to make a list of each pursuit on the butchers paper and double check to ensure that all pursuits mentioned are listed and as the participants want them expressed)

a) How popular or common are these amongst young adults in this area? (depending on the length of the list, may need to just rate a couple in each category eg 2 most, 2 moderately, 2 least popular/common)

Let’s put a popularity rating to each pursuit eg 1 = most popular/common, 2 = moderately popular/common, 3 = least popular/common.

b) Which pursuits are most popular with young men in this area? (use different coloured pen to record responses)

c) Which pursuits are most popular with young women in this area? (use different coloured pen to record responses)

Clarifiers if needed or time permits:

- What do you think most affects the popularity of these leisure pursuits?

- What sort of things are used by the young adults in this area when they are involved in leisure – eg places or spaces, facilities, equipment, people, organisations, processes?

- Do you think that living in this area restricts the options for satisfying leisure for young adults? In what way?
**Question 5**

Is there anything else anyone would like to say before we finish up with the focus group?

**Final statement:** Thank you for participating in this focus group, the results from this session will be summarised and emailed to you. No names will be used in the summary and your privacy will be maintained. You will be invited to check the summary for accuracy and as well as to make additional contributions.


Brown, W. (2006). Individual or population approaches to the promotion of physical activity ... is that the question? Journal of Medical Science in Sport, 9, 35–37. doi: 10.1016/j.jsams.2006.02.005


Time and Transitions


Time and Transitions


Time and Transitions


