

Leisure & Young Married Women in Malta

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ABSTRACT

The impact of leisure on personal development and subjective well-being makes it a critical issue in women's studies. Leisure time gives women the space in which they can experiment with different lifestyles, as well opportunities for identity development. However, strong gender divisions in leisure opportunities and involvement exist. The paper documents how young women's leisure is constrained by virtue of the female's role in Maltese society, including domestic responsibilities, the dual shift, time fragmentation and childcare and, even more importantly, women's own perceptions of appropriate leisure time and activities. Within the Maltese cultural context, women continue to face enormous challenges in participating in the social, economic, political and cultural fields. The role culturally perceived to be most important for a woman is that of mother and consequently women often find themselves confined to the limited space of the family and home and deprived of more engaging social roles. 18 women participated in qualitative in depth interviews, which were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. A constant comparative approach was used to inductively develop themes. The analysis focuses on young married women's perceptions and experiences of leisure, and identifies those aspects of their situation which facilitate or constrain their opportunities for leisure, the meaning that leisure has for them and their feelings regarding this matter. The text illustrates that young married women in Malta experience a substantial decrease in their leisure time once they become mothers, and that this decrease may be attributed to cultural ideologies and the maintenance of traditional gender stereotypes.

Keywords: leisure, young married women, ideology, gender, Malta

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH AGENDA

Leisure may be very simply defined as 'activity chosen in relative freedom for its qualities of satisfaction' (Kelly 1996:3). It is, however an elusive concept because it involves a vast panorama of human activity, and one person's idea of leisure may very well be seen as work or a chore for another. On a large scale, leisure is phenomenal in terms of values expressed, money spent and time invested. On an individual level, leisure enriches people's lives by providing a context where the individual is recognized. 'Leisure identities may be central to the uniqueness of the self' (Kelly, 1996: 35). This

makes leisure a key factor in the development of young adults as it is in the realm of leisure that young people truly become themselves. 'Put simply, leisure has a big part to play in helping young people to make healthy and successful adjustments in this phase of their life' (Hendry *et al.* 1993: 181).

However, 'many studies of young people's leisure activities highlight the maintenance of strong gender divisions' (Azzopardi 2000:52), with a body of evidence existing to confirm that women generally have less time, resources and opportunities for leisure than men, and a narrower range of options on where and with whom to spend it (Wearing & Wearing, 1988; Deem, 1986). This will be shown to be particularly salient within the Maltese cultural context. Research also indicates that 'a key concept at the heart of ideas about leisure is the freedom to choose how to spend one's time' (Madoc-Jones & Coates 1996:117), and that Maltese women's leisure is constrained by a number of factors that impinge on this time by virtue of the female's role in Maltese society. Such factors include maintaining primary responsibility for domestic chores, the dual shift, time fragmentation and childcare (Kelly 1996) and, primarily, women's own views of what constitutes appropriate leisure time. (Green *et al.* 1990).

The main objectives of this study are to identify the perceptions and actual leisure experiences of young Maltese married women, highlighting which aspects of their situation promote or facilitate, and which constrain their opportunities for leisure. The research aims to gain a better understanding of the leisure experiences of young married women, including establishing whether the leisure of young women in Malta today is still being influenced by traditional cultural ideologies. It is recognized that gender is not the only phenomenon that impacts on leisure experiences and that socio-economic variables

are also of importance (Kelly, 1986). The thorough examination of these however runs beyond the scope of the present paper.

THE MALTESE CONTEXT

The oft-described obstacles to women's leisure participation -- ranging from socialization to the demands of domestic and parenting obligations -- are surely at work in Malta (Boissevain 1972). Recent survey data indicate that the Maltese still hold some of the most conservative views on the role of women in all of Europe (Abela 1994). Most Maltese have long considered the role of women to be primarily and properly confined to that of wife, mother and housekeeper. The life of women outside the home has mainly focused on contacts with other women and with members of their extended family. These life patterns, of home-bound activities and the social separation of the sexes, obviously constrain leisure careers for Maltese women. The still potent influence of the Catholic Church tends to promote and reinforce traditional role assignments for women; and this has been mirrored in the legal system until very recently (Xuereb 1975; Bestler 1998).

Recent years have seen changes relevant to the position of women in Maltese society. For instance, the birth rate has fallen precipitously since 1947; a growing economy has led to the entry of many more women into labour market; the university student population has become more than 40% female; and recent reforms of property, marriage and employment laws have dismantled legal discrimination against women (Bestler, 1998).

In Malta, as in most countries, the recognition of woman's potential to improved

human resources and to scientific and economic growth, is dawning gradually.

Still women continue to be under-represented in high position in academic, research, industries and decision taking posts. The female participation in the labour supply is 35% of the female working age population, indicating that the traditional role of women as the non-queens of the household is prevalent. The ratio of women to men gainfully employed is just less than 3:7. However there was a sharp increase of 4.9% in these last two years particularly in the Communication and Business Sectors. Because of family commitments the number in part-time employment is high (Scriha 2001).

The code of honour and shame, prevalent in many Mediterranean societies, is also relevant to this discussion. According to a number of experts in the field, it is of utmost importance to social life in all Mediterranean countries. Some authors, such as Peristiany (1966), state that honour is actually part of an embracing value system, common to all Mediterranean people. Following these scholars, it is suggested, that honour carries particular meanings and prescribes certain differential qualities, as well as modes of behaviour for men and women. Gender-specific adherence to these prescriptions brings about honour and social respect, while deviance results in a state of disgrace. If women, for example, do not mix with unrelated men and stay within their family boundaries, their honour is safe. Therefore, a consequent interpretation of the code of honour should almost necessarily lead to a separation of genders, restricting women to the family network and men occupying the public sphere. It is therefore not surprising that gender separation can be observed in many Mediterranean countries. In Malta the traditional separation of labour is, consequently, not questioned. In the family the wife is responsible for housework and child raising. The most important role in life for a woman seems to be that of a wife, housewife and mother. Women are responsible for the family

work and remain in the "private sector". Women are rather invisible the so called "public sector", i.e. in politics and in the economy. Men go out for work and earn the family income, women stay in the house. A married woman who does not keep her household in perfect order or is seen with other men risks that people gossip about her. For this reason most women do their utmost to fulfill their social role in society (O'Reilly Mizzi 1981: 82–83). Women restrict themselves to contacts mainly with other women. Within the kinship the relations between women play a central role. If there is a big family meeting like a baptism or a wedding one can see women sitting and talking together separately and also men doing the same thing together separately. If a woman is sitting next to a man this will be her husband. It is important to note that the code of honour and shame is also strengthened by the Catholic Church, which is still very powerful in Maltese society (Bestler 1998).

The concept of honour and shame has not been without criticism. Herzfeld and Giordano, for example, although not denying the usefulness of the concept, seem to be convinced that its significance was grossly exaggerated in the past (Giordano 1994, Herzfeld 1980). According to them, Mediterranean societies were portrayed as far too homogenous, "exotic" and "archaic" (Giordano 1994: 177). In Malta, the situation of women began to change in the sixties, due to economical changes, such as the rise of industrialization and the development of tourism, as well as the introduction of television. Due to processes of modernization the *old* code of honour gradually faded away and women gained a much wider scope of action than ever before (Bestler 1998: 220).

Still, Myriam Spiteri Debono, a Maltese public notary and party candidate for Parliament confirms: "Women have problems, because most of them have got still less free time on

their hands than men. And therefore, they have the family, some have family and work, full or part time, some take care of old relatives" (Interview 20.04.1990 cited in Bestler 1998).

WOMEN AND LEISURE

Although there has been significant positive change in recent years, elements of the traditional gender stereotypes of women are still prevalent and continue to restrict women's leisure (Kelly 1996). Gilligan (1982) argues that because of their socialization, women define themselves in terms of personal relationships and their ability to care for others. This caring ethic is central to women's identity and the development of a feminine personality but is devalued in today's society and restricts young married women, especially mothers, because it is a continuous role that usurps much of their time. Since it is so central to their identity, women often feel guilty when they lapse from that role. These feelings could arguably be even further entrenched as a result of the traditional family values that are still so strong in Malta (Abela, 2000), and that are, in turn, firmly based on the centrality of the mother figure within the family.

Studies show that many young people believe in an equitable marriage, with an equal sharing of household tasks. However, in practice what actually develops is the traditional division of labour with the woman bearing the bulk of the household chores, especially after the birth of children and when women are not in employment (Tabone 1995; Bee 1998; Roberts 1999; Ameen 2004). Married women typically fit their leisure activities around their responsibilities, choosing activities that can be done at home in conjunction with household tasks. As a group, women in their late 20s and early 30s,

especially those with dependent children and those of a lower socioeconomic level, are least likely to be found involved in leisure outside the home (Deem 1986; Coakley 2001).

Both financial resources and education are influential in the area of young women's leisure, but while money plays a part in the variety and frequency of leisure one can pursue, education is the factor that most influences early leisure socialization, acting as a strong foundation for future leisure participation, besides also being perceived as an acceptable source of leisure for women (Deem, 1986). All this implies that education plays a primary role in the leisure of young women, both as an early start to leisure and also as leisure in itself, from where young women derive knowledge, skills and confidence that can only serve to enhance their quality of life.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The research focus is on eighteen young married Maltese women, some of them mothers, who are in the stage of young adulthood and who are experiencing adult life roles such as marriage, employment and/or childrearing. The interest lies mainly in their perception of leisure and in their past and present leisure experiences. The following research questions are addressed:

1. What perception do young married Maltese women have of leisure?
2. What are the actual leisure experiences of these young married Maltese women?
3. What opportunities do these women have to participate in leisure activities?

The emphasis is on the women's "lived experience" (Van Manen 1977), and on the meanings these women associate with leisure. (Miles & Huberman 1994). Data collection took place via a semi-structured in-depth interview which is a strong research

tool in terms of validity, and ‘an appropriate technique for exploratory research’ (Stokowski 1995:77) since it provides for conversation in an informal manner while at the same time being structured and defined, enabling indirect probing and follow-up questions if necessary.

The interview was based on a topic guide exploring the three research questions. The first section focused on the young women’s perceptions of leisure – how they define leisure, what it means to them and how they view their leisure in relation to that of different groups in society, such as that of men, single women, their husbands, and so on. Previous research (Deem 1986; Green *et al.* 1990) indicated that asking women about the meaning of leisure to them could be misunderstood due to the invocation of masculine connotations of free time and that terms like well-being and asking about enjoyable aspects of daily life were more thought provoking. This led to the inclusion of such terms in the interviews. Information obtained here could identify cultural values and ideologies held by the young women, as well as emphasize the importance of leisure and what it means to them. The second section deals with the actual leisure experiences of these young women, namely the type and frequency of leisure they participate in, if any, and its impact on their intra- and inter-personal relationships. Finally, the third section investigates the domestic situation of these young women, their past leisure socialization, and their educational and employment status, as well as that of their husbands. Besides the influence of income and education on the leisure participation of young married women, this data could also identify any differences between the leisure of housewives and employed women, and may highlight opportunities to leisure in terms of help in the spheres of domestic work and childcare. The criteria for eligibility were being married, of

different socio-economic levels, and aged between 20 and 30 years of age, the latter being at the upper end of the range cited for youth in the National Youth Policy of Malta (2003). Eighteen young women were chosen in all and these were selected through the process of snowballing, whereby the researcher asked participants and other individuals whether they knew of anyone who fell within the pre-established parameters willing to participate in the study. Since one's socio-economic situation is a contributing factor, this research also had to take this into consideration. Standards for establishing socio-economic status were obtained from the National Statistics Office, Malta. The determining factor is taken to be wage,

The participants are conceptualized as belonging to three sub-groups of six respondents each - the first including those young women who are full-time housewives and mothers, the second consisting of mothers who are also employed outside the home, whether full-time or part-time, and the third group made up of those women who are married and employed but have no children. Permission to use a tape-recorder was obtained from each individual interviewee and all interviews were recorded and transcribed.

LIMITATIONS

This research is primarily limited by the small number of participants, and because it does not account for young women who have children with disabilities, single or separated mothers, or women of a very high or very low socio-economic level – all factors which could significantly affect both the availability of leisure time and the opportunities for different types of leisure activities. The researchers' own bias also has to be considered, namely that many young women are unprepared for the impact that

having a child has on their time, and that unless adequate practical support is given to these women, leisure becomes a thing of the past that seems impossible to recapture.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained highlights definite patterns in the leisure career from adolescence through young adulthood and clearly shows how the leisure of young women is affected by one's life situation, and particularly by the caring role, which is a vital part of the female personality (Gilligan 1982).

Perceptions of leisure.

The most commonly expressed definition of leisure was that of free time spent in relaxation and enjoyment whilst breaking away from the usual routine. Participants stressed the importance of leisure, particularly personal leisure time away from family members, and its positive effect on their psychological well being, on their sense of personal identity, and on their physical health.

"Leisure is an activity that takes your mind off other things and that one chooses and enjoys doing" – Roberta.

"By leisure I understand free time and relaxation, just doing what I enjoy doing most" – Angela.

The participants emphasized the importance of freedom of choice as a crucial component of the leisure experience (Henderson *et al.* 1989; Madoc-Jones & Coates 1996). All this suggests that young married women place a high value on leisure and on its perceived positive effect on their general well-being, and supports research (Green *et al.* 1990) linking relaxation with the opportunity to have time and space for oneself, free from the interruptions and demands of others.

“Leisure is important for my personal identity because I like to be alone and need to have that time for myself” – Darlene.

“Time for myself is very important because I feel that I need it for my well-being” – Rowena.

Leisure experiences

All the women in the study enjoyed some form of leisure activity, most commonly, reading, watching television, socializing with friends, and eating out. However, women who had no children were found to have a much more active leisure life mainly based outdoors, and their leisure time was easily divided into both personal time, as well as time spent with the husband and extended family. Young mothers, whether employed or not, had indoor based and more passive leisure activities, mainly tailored around the presence of children and therefore effectively limited and not freely chosen.

“I don’t see much television but when I do, I end up watching cartoons with the children” – Rowena.

“Sometimes I manage to read something while my daughter draws but I have to snatch the moment” – Donna.

“I try to exercise along with a DVD but it all depends on whether my daughter goes to sleep” – Tara.

These women did not participate in any kind of sporting activity, and personal outdoor activities were relatively infrequent because much of their outdoor leisure time was family centered. This group also viewed grooming and personal hygiene as leisure

time, even though both of these really concern one's maintenance (Steinberg 1996).

Notwithstanding the type of leisure activity, it was generally limited to between fifteen to thirty minutes a day.

"I enjoy grooming, such as having a face mask or taking care of my nails" – Donna.

"At times, I have no time to do my hair and have a shower" – Rachel.

"Even if I have half an hour to pluck my eyebrows or fifteen minutes to dress in peace I really enjoy it" – Rowena.

All the above points highlight the lack of personal leisure time of young married mothers, emphasizing the presence of a trend towards a complete and negative change in the leisure career of young women mainly due to motherhood, from active and outdoor based to relatively passive, indoor based and family centered leisure. Although freedom to choose how to spend one's leisure time is a primary component of the leisure experience (Henderson *et al.* 1989), all the young mothers felt that their actual leisure patterns were not their preferred activities but rather role-constrained obligations or the best fit in the present circumstance. This absence of freedom of choice brought about deep feelings of frustration, moodiness and being tied down, as well as a sense of loss of identity, supporting research highlighting these negative feelings (Skevington *et al.* 1989; Madoc-Jones & Coates 1996; Kelly 1996).

"As regards time for myself, it's always stolen time" – Vicky.

"Completely alone, I don't have any personal leisure time during the week" – Lorna.

"I spend more free time doing something with my son or my husband than I do on myself" – Sarah.

“Little things are my leisure, like leaving the children with my father while my mother and I go shopping. Even then it’s shopping for the children, like shoes or copybooks but at least I have the adult company of my mother” – Rachel.

“Sometimes we have a girls’ night out, maybe once every two months” – Tara.

“It’s pretty rare to meet my friends alone because when I meet them it inevitably entails taking the children along” – Donna.

Constraining and Facilitating Contingencies

Although much has changed in recent years in the way of women’s emancipation and gender equality (Walby 1990; Corey & Schneider Corey 1993; Karsten 1995), the perception remains that Maltese society still has traditional views and that motherhood plays a central role in traditional family values. These cultural ideologies pose psychological constraints on women’s freedom of choice in leisure. In fact, motherhood was found to be a major factor limiting leisure for young married women because it contributes towards a denial of the self, whereby the mother continuously places her family’s needs before her own.

“I think that our culture has not changed enough yet. The woman still remains the primary care giver and still carries out the majority of household tasks” – Donna.

“Society still has traditional views as to a woman’s place and what she can do. The house is still associated with the woman and her leisure time is always limited whether she works outside the house or not” – Karen.

“There’s so much involved in a mother’s work. You have to be good in everything, like a good cook, good mother, making your children as happy as possible. There’s a lot of responsibility” – Rachel.

“When the child is really young there’s the special bond which I feel is important and may be missed out on by working mums” – Mandy.

“ I think the woman is the fulcrum of the family” – Rowena.

Young mothers also experience strong feelings of guilt in relation to their personal leisure time, because they feel that it is unfair for them to enjoy themselves whilst leaving their child with a carer. These guilt feelings and the denial of self were found to be common to all the mothers in this study, whether employed or not, highlighting the strength of the caring role as part of the feminine personality (Gilligan, 1982), and indicating that a lack of time is not truly a major discerning factor limiting the leisure of young married women, but that guilt feelings and ideologies are significantly more restrictive. This supports research indicating that psychological constraints may be of greater relevance than material ones (Iso-Ahola 1984).

“The family’s needs are of greater priority to a woman than her own leisure time” – Karen.

“My leisure preferences all come last” – Donna.

“I don’t go because I feel awkward leaving the children at my mum for an extra hour so that I can go and enjoy myself. I don’t think that its fair and I always end up feeling indebted to her” – Rowena.

“I chose to give up my leisure because it was an unselfish thing to do, but also because I felt guilty. Why should I be doing my own thing all the time?” – Rachel.

“Since I work long hours I don’t really have time off because you’re not going to dump the children on a babysitter again, you know what I mean?” – Lorna.

Employment.

Notwithstanding the importance placed on the mother as the fulcrum of the family, the women felt that the housewife role contributed towards a loss of identity and a lower social status, supporting research by Deem (1986) and Madoc-Jones & Coates (1996), while employment, although contributing towards the dual shift, entailed many benefits, such as increased self-esteem, opportunities for socializing, daily structure, greater financial and psychological independence, and a strong tie to good health (Coward 1992 cited in Giddens 1994: 185). This highlights the importance of leisure, with its inherent psychosocial benefits, for young married mothers, particularly full-time housewives with young children at home whose current situation may place them at a disadvantage in terms of personal fulfillment, relative isolation, fewer opportunities for socializing and a lack of structure in their daily routine (Basow 1992; Clement and Page 1998).

“Employed women have more status and although I have a Degree, sometimes I feel that people look down on me because I’m just a housewife really” – Roberta.

“I feel useless even though I know that I’m doing something good. It’s too lonely and boring for me” – Elaine.

“I feel that my work gives me a lot of satisfaction. I can help people and feel useful and worth something” – Donna.

“Work keeps me going. It stimulates me, challenges me, gives me self-satisfaction and status, as well as the space to be creative” – Karen.

“I miss that challenge even though I know that it’s going to be an added pressure and workload. For me, it’s worth it” – Rachel.

“Work helps you structure your life because you know what your working hours are and when you are free” – Karen.

“Through work I got to know a lot of things that I never knew staying at home. Work is good for your self-esteem and for socializing. You challenge your beliefs and learn about people” – Elaine.

“It’s important for me to have my own pay. I can’t imagine asking my husband for a fiver every time I want to get my hair done” – Rowena.

Husband’s involvement.

On a positive note, the husband’s involvement in childcare was the single, strongest factor that enabled the women to pursue their preferred leisure activity since this reduced the women’s feelings of guilt because the children in question would still be with their own parent. The husband’s encouragement and support therefore appeared to free these women, both physically and psychologically, from constraints on their leisure time.

“He takes the children out himself so that I can do something or other. If it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t be able to enjoy my leisure definitely because I wouldn’t think of leaving the children always at my mum, so I really appreciate it and give him credit for it” – Roberta.

When the husband does not pull his weight in childcare, this has a very negative impact on the leisure of his wife who does not feel comfortable leaving the children in his care.

“If I go out, he takes our son to my mother’s even though we would have agreed that he’d keep him himself. He doesn’t cooperate or encourage me at all, even in that sense” – Melanie.

“When I do leave the children with my husband, he takes them to his mum because he doesn’t feel comfortable feeding and caring for the little one” – Annabel.

Education and Early leisure socialization.

Educational achievement emerged as a very significant factor in the area of women’s leisure. The longer one stayed on in school, the greater the chance of developing and maintaining different leisure interests. Women with a higher level of education appeared more able to ignore or overcome constraints on their leisure. This could be due to enhanced personal and social skills, as well as a greater awareness of one’s rights. Early leisure socialization had a positive impact on respondents’ self-esteem, confidence, independence and social skills, as well as on the maintenance of an active leisure life throughout adolescence and young adulthood, at least until starting a family, with parental encouragement and influence a close second. This supports research highlighting the positive impact of leisure activities on the healthy physical and psychological development of young people (Hendry et al., 1993; Steinberg, 1996), as well as the long-lasting effects of early leisure socialization (Shivers & deLisle, 1997; Roberts, 1999), and the impact of parental influence on young people’s involvement in leisure (Hendry et al., 1993).

“Starting drama at sixth form was a real turning point for me because I changed from being really shy to becoming more of an extrovert. It was a leisure activity that completely affected my life” – Rachel.

“Today I feel a better person because of my running. It helps you to become more confident” – Darlene.

“I do feel that drama has propelled me to become more confident and has helped me in socializing. Whereas before I used to stay out of things for fear of looking stupid in front of others, now I just get up and do what I have to do” – Mandy.

“These activities definitely affected me in general, mostly in the way I socialize because I’m very confident and independent” – Davina.

“Nowadays I thank God for my past leisure activities which helped me to meet people and socialize. They were crucial for my development” – Karen.

DISCUSSION

On a positive note, early leisure socialization was found to be very beneficial to the young women in this study, because of the positive impact of past leisure activities on their personal and social skills. ‘Childhood and youth leisure socialization are crucial because adults do not learn haphazardly but incrementally, on the basis of existing skills and interests’ (Roberts 1999:140), meaning that an emphasis on early leisure socialization has potentially long-term beneficial effects, such as increased self-esteem, confidence and social skills, as well as providing the opportunity to improve on existing physical and/or creative skills, which could in turn lead to greater commitment. Research indicates that it is easier to keep the committed active ‘than to convert couch potatoes’ (Roberts 1999: 138). Therefore, the importance of early leisure socialization must be stressed, with particular emphasis on existential leisure, which is concerned with healthy physical and psychological development and with enhancing the quality of life.

All of these long-term benefits may be of particular significance to young women because research identifies many constraints to their leisure even in adolescence, such as a lack of emphasis on competitive sports among females, socio-cultural factors and restrictive stereotypes as to what is and is not an appropriate leisure pursuit (Kelly 1996; Hargreaves 2000). Although socio-cultural factors were not found to be substantially limiting for young married women as regards their leisure pursuits, they take on heightened significance with motherhood and appear much more restrictive than such factors as time or limited financial resources. The negative effect on their leisure is staggering, with a clear shift from outdoor based, active leisure during adolescence, young adulthood and marriage, to an indoor based and relatively passive leisure once they become mothers. Difficulty in maintaining the previous leisure activities appears to be due to strong guilt feelings that surface in relation to leisure and also due to a general denial of the self, whereby the mother gives greater priority to the needs of her family over her own. These feelings, however, may be partly offset by the husband's encouragement and support, as well as by his involvement in childcare. Having said this, however, it is important to bear in mind that the husband may be unable rather than unwilling to participate in childcare because of constraints on his own time, such as long working hours. Therefore, sometimes it is not simply the case of a change in behaviour because for some people, the realities of their life situation and obligations dictate matter. It is more plausible that a deeper, inherent change in the leisure of young married women could be brought about through a process of empowerment which increases personal and social skills and which enables young women to overcome restrictive ideologies.

CONCLUSION

This research primarily aimed at gaining an understanding of the leisure perceptions and experiences of a group of young married women, as well as identifying factors that facilitate or constrain their pursuit of leisure. The importance of this study lies in the fact that such an understanding of the realities of the life of young married women can help towards greater social change in the form of a more specific foundation on which to build future policy and service development. The present trend of a shift towards more passive and indoor-based leisure activities for women once they become mothers is not something that can be changed instantly because of the cultural ideologies circumscribing their perceptions and behaviour. What is needed is a deeper change over a long-term whereby leisure becomes so much a part of their way of life that young women will be better equipped to overcome constraints to their leisure time. Youth is a peak time of leisure needs (Hendry *et al.* 1993; Steinberg 1996) and arguably provides an ideal time in which to target such a change through socialization.

The importance of existential leisure for quality of life has been highlighted throughout this paper but the following quote illustrates it perfectly - 'leisure that is free and fulfilling is a condition of life and a state of being that is as much a gift as an achievement' (Kelly 1996:199).

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