

## **Families at leisure outdoors: well-being through adventure**

POMFRET, Gill <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1161-7703>> and VARLEY, Peter

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<https://shura.shu.ac.uk/24418/>

---

This document is the Accepted Version [AM]

### **Citation:**

POMFRET, Gill and VARLEY, Peter (2019). Families at leisure outdoors: well-being through adventure. Leisure studies. [Article]

---

### **Copyright and re-use policy**

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

## **Families at leisure outdoors: Well-being through adventure**

### **Word count**

8,637 including paper title, sub-headings, reference list and Table 1. Word count excludes Abstract.

### **Abstract**

This study investigates families who choose to co-participate in outdoor adventure holidays, and explores how they benefit from these shared experiences. In so doing, it seeks to determine the role of adventure tourism in developing and enhancing family well-being (FWB). Hyper-modern family life for many is powered by technological hardware, each room in the house replete with on-line pleasures, distractions and identities. In response to this dystopia, some families opt to take adventure holidays together. However, scholarship concerning collective experiences of adventurous leisure, in this case as families, is limited. Using a qualitative whole family approach, 15 (adventure tourist) families were interviewed, totalling 62 interviewees (29 adults and 33 children under 18 years old), in their home environments. Four key themes related to FWB emerged. First, families extended their active lifestyles to adventure holidays and repeatedly mentioned the health and fitness benefits gained from these experiences. Second, adventure holidays facilitated unmediated time together for families. Third, parents harboured ideals of positive personal development for their children in these adventure settings. Fourth, making memories during adventure holidays, and recollecting these post-trip, were integral to family bonding. Further research should pay attention to non-traditional family groups in adventure tourism, and to various socio-economic and cultural groups in this context.

## **Introduction**

Early ideals concerning the benefits of challenge and effort in the great outdoors echo back to 20<sup>th</sup> century notions, and, nowadays, adventurous gap years, Duke of Edinburgh Awards (in the UK at least) and adventure holidays are highly valued as potentially delivering the ‘right stuff’ and developing elusive qualities in young people. Distant memories of Baden Powell’s 1908 simple yet powerful conception of young people working together on basic life tasks in the outdoors, undertaking adventurous activities, and becoming responsible junior citizens operating to a moral and communal code, juxtapose with the ills of late-modern life (Macleod & Welton, 1984; Warren, 2017). The regimented, uniformed approach and Christian Sunday parades of the Scouts, however, has resulted in declining interest. Nonetheless, most small towns, in the UK at least, still have active Scout groups. Yet, the values of challenge and co-operation in adventurous settings as vehicles for positive youth development remain ingrained in the minds of many parents. Against the wholesome, utopic (if somewhat militaristic and imperialist) outdoor codes of the Scouting movement are the dystopic visions of contemporary living, which run something like this: fragmented families comprising individuals inhabiting various time-zones and of various ages driven along personalised life trajectories with competing ontologies and priorities. Like ships passing in the night. Cellular households, powered by technological hardware, allow family members to come and go almost anonymously, as teenagers vanish after school up to darkened bedrooms with flickering screens, ethereal connections, and mounting academic and social pressures. Each room in the house offers a console and a different menu of on-screen pleasures, distractions and identities, and reduces both need and propensity for interaction and mobility (Gottschalk, 2018). This is a classic nightmare of the contemporary ‘family’ of strangers, where home is a network of media zones and advanced technological apparatus (Virillio, 2005; Wajcman, 2015).

It is in response to these troubling conditions and remembered values that some families seek to redress some of these effects by going on holiday together. Amongst the range of products on offer, active outdoor adventure holidays and leisure activities are rising in popularity (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015), including experiences specifically targeted at families. Adventure activities outdoors may offer new sensual engagements with nature – the feel, smell, sounds and taste of the outdoors contrasting distinctively with the relatively ocular experience of urban industrial life (Lewis, 2000; Simmel, 2012). They may also allow unmediated (and less media-mediated) time together, offering lived experiments in mutual support, co-operative achievement and moments of belonging. There is little academic endeavour in this aspect of family tourism. Extant studies highlight the benefits of holidays for family tourists (Lehto, Choi, Lin & MacDermid, 2009; Obrador, 2012) although it is not known whether these transfer to family adventure tourism experiences. Relatedly, there is a gap in the literature on family adventure tourists, yet adult adventure tourists are fairly well-understood (Buckley, 2012). While these prior investigations potentially provide insights into family adventure tourists, the collective and shared nature of family adventure holidays make these experiences quite different. The paucity of research on these families has prompted calls for further work in this area (Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014; Pomfret, 2019). Accordingly, we set out to critically assess the ‘how and why’ of families who choose to spend precious free time co-participating in activities in adventure tourism settings. We explore how families benefit from these shared experiences and determine the role of adventure tourism in developing and enhancing family well-being (FWB). There is a need to understand what drives well-being and its associations with happiness and life satisfaction particularly as, for some theorists, the opposite conditions may include depression and anxiety (Steger, Frazier, Kaler & Oishi, 2006). Contemporary commentators suggest a mental health epidemic, particularly amongst young people, and point to the significant role of families in addressing

the phenomenon (Campbell, 2018). As adolescent suicide rates spiral up, and social media ‘worlds’ offer solace to alienated, confused young people (O’Keeffe & Clark-Pearson, 2011), the role of the family and parental support is increasingly recognised as crucial (Moretti & Peled, 2004).

On the supply side, some organisations offer a range of commodified and soft multi-activity adventure experiences to accommodate for the varied ages, needs and skill levels of individual family members. Still more specialised related niches such as father and son bonding experiences are also on the rise. Itineraries tend to be a mixture of collective activity participation interspersed with parent- or children-only pursuits. This approach is said to positively impact on the ‘success’ of a family holiday because it offers opportunities for optimal social experiences (Larsen, 2013). But what is ‘success’ in this context, and what are the outcomes sought by the different members of the family group? In an effort to answer this challenge, we attempt to discover some of the anticipated and actual effects of such experiences, and also to seek critical reflections from the families’ post-experience. First, we summarise literature on well-being, FWB and the reported benefits of participation in adventurous leisure pursuits. Second, we explore families’ experiences of adventure holidays using whole family (Schänzel, 2010) interviews. Third, we discuss prominent themes emerging from the interview data: extending active lifestyles to adventure holidays, togetherness, personal development, and memories and narratives. Fourth, we present our final thoughts about collective well-being through family adventure holidays, and propose ideas for future research.

## **Literature review**

### ***Family well-being, recreation and tourism***

Well-being is a contested concept because of its intangible and complex nature. It is replete with various meanings and interchangeable terms (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). Subjective well-being (SWB) features frequently in the literature, and reflects people's happiness, quality of life, personal perspectives, the value they attach to different life experiences, need satisfaction and personal development (Sirgy, 2002). Hedonic well-being (HWB) and eudaimonic well-being (EWB) mirror aspects of SWB (Voigt, 2017). HWB brings immediate pleasure and involves the quest for happiness through enjoyment, positive affective states and reduced negative emotions. It results when individuals are in a carefree state, disengaged from their worries, and enjoying the 'feel good' factor derived from their experiences. Contrastingly, EWB is more holistic and is concerned with the longer term benefits of developing one's potential through meaningful activities which encourage personal-growth and self-actualisation. It involves feeling alive, in harmony with oneself and in control of the important spheres of one's life. Individuals might enjoy EWB through activities which can sometimes be unpleasant but which have positive outcomes (Huta & Waterman, 2014). This is particularly pertinent to adventure tourism, which evokes emotional peaks and troughs during participation (Pomfret, 2012) yet results in intrinsic rewards such as personal development and confidence.

Scholars, such as Rahmani, Gnoth and Mather (2018), have unpacked the well-being construct to understand how tourist experiences facilitate individual well-being. FWB, however, which focuses on the collective social, mental and physiological health of the group's members, has not been considered in the tourism literature. It involves several interconnected dimensions: family cohesion, harmony, conflict, interpersonal relationships, living conditions, functioning, self-sufficiency, resilience, communication, problem solving, parental mental and physical health, parental self-efficacy, satisfaction with family life, and

personal growth (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch & Ungar, 2005; Noor, Gandhi, Ishak & Wok, 2014). The benefits gained from family leisure experiences reflect FWB and include enhanced family functioning, togetherness, bonding, communication, cooperation, trust, family relationships, consolidation of family values and traditions, adaptability and solidarity (Hornberger, Zabriskie & Freeman, 2010; Obrador, 2012). Nonetheless, it is not known whether such benefits transfer to family *adventure* tourism experiences. However, one related study (Goodenough, Waite & Bartlett, 2015) investigated the FWB benefits of organised family woodland experiences. Parents alluded to enhanced social cohesion and family bonding moments from shared participation and watching their children enjoy themselves. They felt more confident and less guilty about their parenting skills, which led to a sense of improved FWB.

Predictors of FWB (Townsend, Puymbroeck & Zabriskie, 2017) have been explored through the core and balance model of family leisure functioning (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). This examines how families achieve a state of equilibrium through dynamic leisure patterns. These are influenced by routine core activities such as watching television or playing in the garden together. They fulfil family needs for familiarity, stability, bonding, cohesion and identity. Contrastingly, balance activities provide opportunities for change, novelty, variety and challenge, they happen less regularly and they require more planning, e.g. holidays and outdoor pursuits. Such activities can facilitate adaptability within families, help them to overcome the challenges of late-modern life, develop as a working unit, achieve family equilibrium, and positively influence parental perceptions of FWB (Freeman & Zabriskie, 2002; Goodenough et al, 2015).

### ***Well-being and adventure tourism***

Most adventure tourism research has investigated individual adult adventure tourists to understand their motives, activity experiences, and the benefits gained from these experiences (e.g.: Buckley, 2012; Fendt & Wilson, 2012; Mykletun & Mazza, 2016). Little research has focused on collective adventure tourism experiences and there has been less emphasis on well-being and adventure tourism until more recently. Investigations have explored traditional connotations of adventure such as risk, sensation seeking and fear. Nonetheless, adventure's role in facilitating positive emotions and enhancing physical and mental health has been recognised (Clough, Houge Mackenzie, Mallabon & Brymer, 2016; Houge Mackenzie & Brymer, 2018). Indeed, diverse well-being benefits reflect the subjective and heterogeneous nature of adventure experiences (Clough et al, 2016). These include fulfilling competence, relatedness and autonomy needs, transformed lives, emotional regulation, joy, camaraderie, bodily kinesthetic feelings and mental toughness (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013). Adventure activity participants enjoy intensely positive hedonic emotions and longer lasting feelings of EWB, culminating in improved self-efficacy and competence (Houge Mackenzie & Brymer, 2018). They experience feelings of freedom from relinquishing control, letting go of their fear, being personally responsible for their actions, and making their own choices (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013). Confronting apparent danger during activity participation encourages positive self-reflection and social confidence, improves self-concept and self-esteem, and enhances well-being and overall happiness (Fletcher & Prince, 2017; Holm, Lugosi, Croes & Torres, 2017).

Returning to the core and balance model (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001), it is possible that there are well-being benefits from family adventure tourism. Goodenough et al (2015) observe that 'the more novel, challenging and less familiar character of balance type [adventure] activities are argued to stimulate learning, growth and flexibility among family

groups, contributing to their collective ability to function positively' (p.378). Accordingly, family adventure tourists have a high propensity to seek out balance activities because challenge intrinsically motivates their participation (Patterson & Pan, 2007).

### ***Family adventure as therapy or leisure?***

There are calls for further research into how adventure activity participation can enhance psychological health and well-being, and be used as a mainstream intervention for mental health (Clough et al, 2016). The benefits are considerable and go beyond the common association of 'the great outdoors' with 'character building' (p.963). Strengthened family quality, cohesion, resilience and relations, improved marital stability, healthy lifestyles, and development of outdoor skills are claimed benefits of such collective activities (Noor et al, 2014). Outdoor therapy purposefully encourages families to partake in challenging adventure activities which necessitate team work, communication, trust and problem solving. It offers opportunities for mastery experiences which, if successfully completed, can enhance family functioning, communication, relationships, and, ultimately, FWB (Huff, Widmer, McCoy & Hill, 2003). Additionally, a key benefit can be collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997), which is a group's belief in their ability to organise and accomplish an activity together. It is suggested that this shared efficacy ('we can do this!') is important to the success of family adventure holidays, particularly when there are differing levels of ability and the activities are challenging. With all of this in mind, we set out to determine the ways in which families might seek and possibly realise some of these benefits in situations which are absolutely not determinedly therapeutic in any clinical sense, but are expressions of a family at leisure, on holiday.

### **Methodology**

Group research is a challenging area, and difficult to facilitate effectively. In the case of families, the pitfalls are potentially more significant, as dominant voices skew impressions of what is or has been important. Likewise, the significance of reflections on earlier experiences, whilst crucial to this research, are inevitably imbued with subjectivities accentuated by life stage, personality, gender, culture and race. Furthermore, as this is a first-cut, exploratory study, a convenience sample of participating families known to the first author was used. Inevitably, this raises questions in terms of the limited socio-economic and cultural breadth afforded.

### ***Whole family approach***

The study adopts a qualitative whole family approach (Schänzel, 2010). This collectively considers parental and children's perspectives, and the dynamics of the family group, and, accordingly, it is inclusive as it explores shared holiday experiences. Families have 'unique group dynamics' with 'special consumptive characteristics' (Lehto et al, 2009, p.835) which all interact to encourage a collective family identity (Gram, 2005), therefore, it is important to investigate families holistically. Yet, few studies research parents and children together (Schänzel & Smith, 2014). Most family tourism research examines parental viewpoints, usually mothers (Gram, 2005; Litvin, Xu & Kang, 2004), with less work on children's perspectives (Blichfeldt, Pedersen, Johansen & Hansen, 2011; Hilbrecht, Shaw, Delamere & Havitz, 2008). An adult-only perspective treats children as passive objects who are 'not yet physically, socially or psychologically ready as a legitimate research participant' (Khoo-Lattimore, 2015; 847). Given that group activity participation is often integral to adventure holidays, and the whole family approach centres around collective experiences, this method suits the purpose of this study.

## ***Respondents***

The first author initially recruited respondents through her personal contacts, targeting families who had previously taken an adventure holiday, or participated in adventure activities while on holiday. A small number of families were recruited through snowball sampling whereby interviewees volunteered to contact other families known to them with similar holiday interests. All families lived either in the city of Sheffield or the wider Yorkshire region (UK). 15 families were interviewed, totalling 62 interviewees (29 adults and 33 children under 18 years old). 14 of the 15 sets of parents were married and there was one single parent. With the exception of one Canadian parent, all respondents were white British. The children's ages were from 5-17 years old, with the majority (22 out of 33) being between 11-17 years old. The average age of the children was 11 years old. 18 boys and 15 girls participated in the interviews alongside their parents.

## ***Data generation***

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the 15 families between September 2017 and January 2018. These took place in the families' homes, as such settings are said to encourage participation (Astedt-Kurki, Paavilainen, & Lehti, 2001) and younger children could play with their toys while joining in the interview. Interviews were conducted informally in open domestic spaces, such as the dining room or kitchen, to encourage family members to be relaxed. Discussions were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim. To prompt younger children to talk about their sensory experiences and to access their voices, a visual method was also used (Pink, 2012). Children aged 10 and under (11 in total) were invited to draw pictures of their favourite holiday activities at the start of the interview. Several children produced drawings which either illustrated adventure activities or other general holiday pursuits. The first author complemented the children on their drawings and

asked them simple questions, such as: Why did you like (the activity) so much? What was the best bit about (the activity)?

Interview themes focused on general family holidays, adventure holidays, lifestyles, adventure holiday motives, experiences during activity participation, and benefits gained. Questions were deliberately exploratory, and mostly directed at all family members. Interviews began with general questions then probed more deeply with sub-questions. Examples of questions included: Why do you like going on adventure holidays? What are the most memorable moments from these holidays? How do you feel you benefit from these holidays? Some questions were aimed at children, such as: What sports or other activities do you like to do? Do you go on holiday without your parents (e.g. Scout camps)? Questions for adults focused on past holidays pre-children, lifestyle activities, and family benefits derived from adventure. For example: What makes for a good family holiday? How do your holidays differ now compared to pre-children? How do you feel your family benefits from these holidays? The interviews lasted for an hour and a quarter on average and all family members were present most of the time. Younger children occasionally became distracted and dipped in and out of the conversation while playing with their toys or wandering off to another part of their house. When this happened, parents' attention sometimes detracted away from the interview. Furthermore, children frequently interrupted each other so that valuable insights into their thinking were sometimes lost. Consequently, these interruptions occasionally resulted in shorter interviews and less deep probing of responses than was desired. Additionally, certain children did not always want to talk, despite verbal encouragement from the first author and, often, the parents. Nonetheless, some became more talkative and animated when describing their activity experiences. Notwithstanding these challenges,

considerable and rich data from parents and their children were generated from these interviews.

### ***Data analysis***

The data analysis process complies with Yardley's (2017) recommendations for qualitative research, which include: sensitivity and attention to the texture of the data; and, transparent, reflexive interpretation of the data. The authors analysed the data inductively, adopting a framework approach (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) to make sense of the families' accounts of their adventure holidays and to unravel key themes for further consideration. The transcripts were manually analysed using the framework's five interconnected stages, starting with the familiarisation stage, which involves full immersion into the data through reading the transcripts and listening to the recordings. Secondly, a thematic framework was developed to further organise and refine the data. Initial attempts at this were descriptive and reflected the aforementioned original interview topics. Nonetheless, when the framework was applied to a sample of transcripts, FWB emerged as a more analytical theme, alongside related themes including active lifestyles, family togetherness, personal development, and memories and narratives. The third stage of indexing concerned methodically applying the thematic framework to all the data, and annotating transcript sections. This required the first author to make judgements about the meaning of the data and the importance of certain themes. The fourth stage of charting the data involved separating the data which reflected the key themes from the original transcripts and reorganising these according to the relevant thematic reference. Accordingly, charts were developed for each key theme, and data from different transcripts were input into each. In the final stage of mapping and interpretation, the data were organised and pieced together to create a holistic picture. This involved returning to the research objectives, reviewing the thematic framework and the indexes and charts, examining

different transcript sections for similarities, differences and explanations, exploring connections between the data, and considering the importance of different themes. The second author validated the key themes by working through the interview transcripts and verifying that they reflected his interpretation of the data. Both authors then discussed any discrepancies in their interpretations of the data and this resulted in minor changes to the sub-themes.

Transcripts were further examined using NVivo 11 to support the framework analysis and to provide a credibility check. Additionally, the first author used NVivo 11 to make annotations on and write reflections about the data, such as: 'it's difficult to untangle the reasons why families are active at home compared to being active on holiday, as family lifestyles seem to strongly influence their holiday choices.' The key themes which emerged from the framework analysis were then input as broad codes, and relevant data were dropped into these codes. Following this, data from the framework and NVivo analyses were compared to check for consistency. Accordingly, the data analysis process was analytical, rigorous and resulted in a comprehensive rendering of the key themes.

### **Discussion of emergent themes**

Several topics related to FWB emerged from the interview data, namely: extending active lifestyles to adventure holidays; togetherness; personal development; memories and narratives. The themes presented here focus specifically on the importance of adventure holidays in creating, maintaining and enhancing FWB and its associated benefits. Table 1 provides details about the demographics of family respondents and shows the abbreviated names for different family groups.

**Please insert Table 1 near here**

### *Extending active lifestyles to adventure holidays*

Families participated in many adventure activities on holiday, ranging from fast-paced pursuits such as mountain biking, skiing and white-water rafting to slower-paced ones like canoeing, wild camping and snorkelling. Some created their own adventures while others enjoyed the convenience of a package holiday with a structured itinerary of daily activities. Several parents recounted their diverse adventure holiday experiences in their pre-children lives, and noted the importance of continuing these with their children. Inevitably, the life-stage of 'parent' for many constrains the potential for more focused 'selfish time' (McLanahan & Adams, 1987), but two different effects of this were noted. Firstly, more focused parents would tend to vary activities, negotiating between personal sessions and family activities. Secondly, many would accept the sharing of 'outdoor happiness' with their children in exchange for reduced personal activity requiring higher skill and fitness levels.

When not on holiday, families embraced outdoor active lifestyles, regularly partaking in different activities at home. Holidays provided opportunities to extend their hobbies through participating in their usual activities in different destinations, or trying out new pursuits not available at home. Parents repeatedly mentioned the health and fitness benefits gained, which were more profound on holiday than at home because of the prolonged period over which the activities took place. One Dad (HA) noted that doing the UK coast to coast cycling trip was about the '... health benefits, physically and mentally. It's about being outside and feeling better rather than looking back and regretting things.' Adventure holidays were sometimes catalysts for lifestyle improvements to proactively develop healthy habits. This is illustrated by the HA mum who commented that such trips could 'kick-start things' and 'help you get into better habits. Me and M [daughter] lost some weight and started to eat

more healthily and drink more water.’ Such findings demonstrate the importance of balance activities (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001) in maintaining family health and equilibrium. The comments below strongly reflect the views of many parents.

M’s [ex-husband] dad had heart disease and he had to give up work in his 40s; they’re both overweight and my parents are overweight with type 2 diabetes. I had a cancer diagnosis when I was 36. So, basically, M and I are really committed. We’re both massively motivated by activity for health so we were determined that our kids and us would be active and healthy and set a good example from the outset. It wasn’t about signing up for lessons but being healthy as a lifestyle, and enjoying active holidays. So, for us, it was a conscious parenting decision about how we wanted our family to live. Staying active, mental health as well as physical health (Mum, KN).

On holiday, parents sometimes participated in different or higher level adventure activities to their children for part of the time. This was often the case for families with younger children, who, due to their age, were less experienced. For instance, snow sports holidays provided opportunities for children to develop their skills through lessons while experienced parents could push themselves during their adult-only time on the slopes. Alternatively, parents made time during their holiday to do their favourite activities without the children but involved them in easier versions of the same activity or similar ones as shown by the WA dad’s comments:

It’s usually a combination so we can all get something out of the holidays. For example, when we go to the Alps, we go in a big group and some people will stay back and look after the kids while the others go off and do something quite adventurous. Also, as J [daughter, aged 5] gets older, we can start taking her up more mountains. We can take her to the mountain huts and she can now climb up to about 1000m and by next summer she’ll be climbing higher so we’ll be able to take her to one of the lower huts overnight. That’s quite an adventure for a little child.

Accordingly, it can be important for parents to develop their adventure skills through activity participation at a suitably challenging level while on holiday to enjoy feelings of individual HWB and EWB, which positively contribute towards FWB. However, others are content to

be with their children all the time, particularly if they are older and similarly competent in the activity. For instance, the TR mum remarked that on family ski holidays, ‘I quite like to challenge myself and I think the kids [son, aged 12 and daughter aged 10] do too. Whilst I don’t consider myself to be really hard core, we’ll go down black runs and do a bit off-piste. So, at my level, I do feel adrenalin and feel like I’m pushing myself.’

### ***Togetherness***

Family togetherness is integral to FWB, and holidays provide plentiful opportunities for members to consolidate their ‘we relationship’, thick sociality and authentic togetherness (Larsen, 2013; Obrador, 2012). Nonetheless, too much togetherness combined with activity overload can result in boredom and stress for different family members. Subsequently, this can reduce family functioning and cohesiveness (Gram, 2005). However, findings support other research (Pomfret, 2019) that families seek more rather than fewer opportunities for togetherness during adventure trips. Respondents regularly mentioned the benefits they derived from their shared adventure experiences. They talked about spending quality time together which ordinarily they would not do at home because of distractions such as technology, limited time and competing interests. This togetherness time is highly valued, as noted by the NA mum: ‘we see the holiday as really precious because it’s two weeks when we are all together, without work and after school activities’. Another mum (BA) commented that ‘it’s important to have time together as a family rather than going off and all doing different things or the kids sitting on devices because they’re not engaging with us on something.’ Similarly, in describing their forthcoming adventure holiday, the TR mum reflected that:

Whilst we want to go and explore and go into Marrakech, and go into the Atlas’ mountains, the best thing is that we’ll actually have time together as a family. We

don't actually get to spend that much time together really as there's always somebody who's busy. I think it's really nice that it's going to be just the four of us.

Adventure activities encourage co-created, shared experiences and, as such, naturally bring families together. Therefore, as the BA dad remarked, 'doing something like skiing, you're out all day together, skiing together, on lifts together having a chat. You have that protected time where you wouldn't have this otherwise. It's nice to have that shared enjoyment of something.' Additionally, one of the KN daughters (aged 17) said that 'doing a [surfing] holiday like this really does bring you all together because you are doing an activity. You're not sat on a beach with your headphones in your own world. We were all lobbed in the sea to surf together.' While activity participation facilitates togetherness, the entire holiday experience provides further opportunities for family cohesion and co-creation. For instance, the KN mum reported that:

It's about contributing together to the family experiences and alongside the activities, I expect everybody to pull their weight – the kids cook and tidy up. So, it's about the being together and that for me is what a holiday is. It's about creating and enjoying the experience in a present centred way and just all actively contributing to the experience.

Several families alluded to how problem solving during activity participation encouraged cohesion, particularly with longer adventure experiences such as canoeing and gorge scrambling. For instance, the OA dad, in referring to a canoe expedition in Canada, noted that 'because we're doing different things, we have to work together to solve different problems we wouldn't usually encounter at home. You're certainly out of routine so you have to work together to get the tasks accomplished.' These comments reflect the entire experience of canoeing across lakes in remote environments, setting up camp, making a fire, preparing and cooking food and tidying up afterwards. Problem solving skills are integral to overcoming the challenges inherent in adventure, and competency is critical to enjoyable

experiences. Nevertheless, the way in which these challenges are managed can cause tensions amongst family members (Schänzel & Smith, 2014). This is illustrated by the WA mum, who talked about her experiences of gorge scrambling in Spain with their 5 year' old daughter, noting that '...you work as a stronger family unit because most families are not operating in such stressful situations. If you can manage the conflict it can bring you closer together as it gives you more mechanisms to be able to get on with each other.'

Related to this, bonding was a key benefit families referred to when describing their adventure holidays. They appreciated the opportunity to get to know and understand one another better. Communication between different family members improved and this was particularly important for the HA family who have two children with special needs and an older child. They alluded to fluctuations in their family functioning and regular conflicts between the siblings being commonplace in their daily lives. Yet, when the family were participating in activities, these tensions reduced and communication improved, particularly between the children, as the HA mum noted:

But, when we are out and about, it's [conflict] less so. So, it allows them [the children] to be themselves a bit more and gel together. They can do stuff together like bodyboarding and surfing. It gives them that space and ability to divide and rule. It's an opportunity for them to build their bonds and our bonds with them. It's having the physical space I think.

Some parents talked about the longer term bonding value of adventure trips, suggesting that such holidays encourage EWB and potential for children and their parents to develop competence in their particular activities. The TA dad expressed that 'if we do fun and exciting things, generally they'll [the children] get into the same things'. He went on to suggest that family bonding strongly motivated him to encourage his children to do adventure activities, saying:

I really love mountains and the activities you can do in them so if the boys carry on with these when they get older, that's a bond we can continue with. That's the drive for doing these activities. Now the boys are older we can do more weekends away more often.'

Such comments highlight the importance of generativity (Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011) whereby older family members nurture younger ones to develop a family identity of shared values and traditions.

### ***Personal development***

Parents frequently alluded to how adventure participation prepares their children for the challenges of everyday life. Such views reflect the 'Baden Powell effect' suggested earlier, of adventure participation for personal development. They wanted to expose them to diverse activity experiences so that they would cope with problematic situations when older. The TA dad summed this up, stating that '...it's [doing adventure activities] life skills for the kids. It's teaching them that life isn't always going to be straightforward.' Many parents recognised the personal development value of the entire holiday experience, as expressed by one mum (HU):

I think what we really want to do is make sure the kids get the opportunity to do many different things whilst we are away, whereas pre-kids we would quite happily have gone away to Sardinia or somewhere to climb every day till we had no fingertips left. For the kids it's nice that they get to see different places, have different experiences, try different things, see what they enjoy doing and build up on it.

Other parental comments echo this life preparation theme but refer specifically to the value of adventure activity participation for children. The RO dad suggested that only by putting his three daughters in challenging situations to see how they reacted would he fully understand his offspring and 'what makes them tick, what makes them happy and sad, and what makes them angry.' He went on to say that:

I want to understand them and you're never going to do that if you stay in your comfort zones all your life. The outdoor world pushes them [the children] to slip so they can fail and understand why they fail and move on.

Accordingly, this gradual process of personal development through adventure shapes children's lives and enriches their individual and FWB. Other parents extolled the virtues of pushing their children while they were growing up, reflecting the idea that exceeding one's comfort zone is often integral to fulfilling adventure experiences (Pomfret, 2012). They recounted stories of 'working them [the children] hard when they were young' (KN Mum) to fully benefit from their experiences. Relative to mountain biking, one dad (LA) noted that 'when you see him [the son] all tired and windswept and hungry, you just know and I think he knows it's been great. It prepares him for later on in life and gives him a sense of value'.

Risk is often inextricably linked to challenge and although only a small number of families specifically referred to risk during the interviews, some parents talked about the importance of keeping their children safe and out of 'real' danger during activity participation. Calculated risk and personal development are strongly linked, and overcoming risky situations helps children to develop their confidence in addressing their fears and learning from their mistakes (Staempfli, 2009). This point is reflected in one mum's (TA) remarks that 'it's about controlled risk and the kids might not realise that it is risky'. The dad (TA) continued, noting that 'it's to do with the kids not worrying about the activities they're trying out because we're doing it together as a family'. Unsurprisingly though, parental decisions concerning risk-taking with children can lead to conflicts and disruption in FWB. For instance, the WA mum's comments exemplify the relationship tensions involved in exposing children to potentially dangerous activities:

Sometimes though, doing these activities with the family can cause a lot of tension and you can fall out. It's mainly because of the risk. You know you're doing stuff which can be risky. The risk envelope can be a big source of tension but also you could read a lot more into that because you can be quite judgemental of your partner because he has decided to take a bigger risk with your child, who is your most precious thing. And, so it can cause tensions in relationships and tensions in the way you look at your partner.

Despite the potential for conflict and the risks involved, parents strongly appreciate the benefits of adventure activities for their children and how participation develops their confidence. Older children also recognise this, as reflected in the comments of a 15 year' old boy (KN):

These holidays are a real character builder. You just sort of add it [surfing] to your repertoire of experiences and it builds you as a person and encourages you to test your own limits. You come out of these [adventure] holidays thinking "well I never knew I could do that but now I can". The experience builds your confidence in everyday life.

Additionally, parents are keen to pass on their passion for natural environments and travelling to their children. One parent commented that 'it's [taking adventure holidays] engendering their love for the great outdoors and for the simple things in life' (LA Mum). Similarly, other parents talked about the importance of slowing things down and immersing themselves into natural places to enjoy 'education outside the norms' (LA Dad) and to learn things like 'how to construct a fire, the knowledge of how to protect your backpack from a bear attack, and the transmission of values' (DR Dad).

### ***Memories and narratives***

Making memories during adventure holidays and recollecting these post-trip seemed integral to family bonding and well-being, and generated both positive and negative feelings. It was often challenge which evoked the most intense, longer-lasting memories because of its

propensity to trigger contrasting emotions. For example, the BA mum reflected on the family's experience of canoeing in strong winds across a lake in a remote area of Canada. A combination of inexperience and tricky weather conditions led to a raft of mixed feelings and, consequently, some highly memorable moments. She recounted that as the wind picked up, they considered stopping and waiting for better weather. Nevertheless, they decided to continue:

At the end of the day, we would have waited and we would have set off again and got back. It was funny in a way but it was 'I just want to get back now'. I think the thing is you just don't know what's going to happen. That's what I like about it – the fact that you can't guarantee anything, you can't predict things. It was great to get back and we all laugh about it now and have some great memories. And, we feel we overcame adversity and made it.

Families also benefit from more intense memories because they are focused fully on the activity and this feeling of absorption offers opportunities to experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). The KN mum commented that 'you are wholeheartedly immersed and present in that activity and for me it's being in nature and the whole experience. There's a million things to talk about, whether it's what you do during surfing or how you feel after. It's reflecting on it and building up the memories.' The boy (aged 13) from the LA family also talked about a meaningful moment while snorkelling, noting that his holidays were more memorable when 'something major happens. It's not necessarily good but something's got to happen which is completely bonkers.' He goes on to recall that 'when we went to Egypt, I got stung by a jellyfish. It wasn't a good thing but it makes more memories and you can look back and think "oh, that was good".'

Families generally wanted to immerse themselves into the challenges of their adventure experiences because they recognised the benefits they could derive from these.

Parents talked about how the memories would encourage families to want to continue doing an activity. For example, the OA mum remarked that ‘the kids will remember this [rock climbing] into their adulthood.’ Contrastingly, many parents felt that more conventional, non-active holidays were less memorable than adventure trips as ‘there’s plenty of time to just lay down and do nothing’ and ‘who remembers just sitting on a beach’ (CO Dad). Further illustrating this point, one mum (WR) expressed that ‘I think if you go on a holiday where you don’t do anything, once your tan has faded and you come back, you have a few photos but you are not really going to have a lot to show for it are you?’

Reminiscing about adventure holidays also encourages storytelling and creates a ‘family narrative’ (DR Mum) about overcoming challenges, accomplishing goals and enjoying optimal experiences. Furthermore, making long-lasting memories is an essential part of the holiday for many families. Parents want their children to remember their holidays throughout their lives and into adulthood. Sharing adventure experiences ‘probably brings you closer together as a family as you’ve got a lot more to talk about around the dinner table’ (TA Dad). Memories are enhanced through photos and videos which serve as prompts to recall special moments, particularly for children who consolidate their memories using these. The girl (aged 12) from the NA family remarked that ‘at the end [of the holiday], I feel it’s over, but then I look at the photos that I’ve taken and I remember. So, it stays with you forever.’ These visual cues also facilitate family bonding and closeness. For instance, one mum (BR) noted that post-holiday ‘when we’re looking through the pictures together, we have lots of close conversations’.

## **Conclusion**

We set out to confront a significant lacuna in the tourism literature: the paucity of attention paid to families' collective experiences on adventure holidays. First, relative to FWB, much of the narrative in fact focused on familial responsibility, towards healthy, positive and developmental experiences and lasting memories of them. Second, and underplayed but present in the data, were the tensions between subjective motivations and desires versus collective aspirations in a changing, ageing family; the negotiations of social capital and ideologies concerning responsible tourism consumption, in terms of consuming what is 'right', often vicariously, for the positive development and well-being of others. Parents repeatedly mentioned the health and fitness benefits gained, which were more profound on holiday than at home due to focused, extended activity time. Third, the idea that adventure holidays can allow high quality, unmediated time together for families (togetherness) was solidly supported and discussed. Fourth, parents expressed clear ideals of positive personal development for their children in these outdoor settings. For over a hundred years, and particularly in the UK and Scandinavia following both the Scouting movement principles and *friluftsliv* ideas from Kurt Hahn (Outward Bound instigator), there has been a recognition that experiences outdoors, particularly challenging ones, draw out and develop useful human qualities such as perseverance, toughness, care, and team working. Finally, the priceless gift of memories together comes via the strong emotions and powerful experiences during adventure holidays. This last theme, added to the togetherness value, seemed important to family bonding and provided an emotional anchor-point bolstering a sense of FWB. Other related elements such as the mental and physical benefits of self-sufficiency, helping one another in outdoor settings, and shifts in respect and status positions as a result of task efficacy contributed to the overall FWB benefits.

Thus, whilst it is not necessarily the case that ‘a family that plays together stays together’, it seems plausible that shared adventure experiences could provide healthy, bonding, positively developmental and memorable collective experiences even if, in the final assessment, not all are comfortable or happy, all of the time. Well organised adventure tourism experiences may offer considerable potential for an enhanced sense of collective and individual well-being in social groups, against the huge shifts in everyday estrangement ushered in by mobile, private technological advancements. More work in this domain needs to be done, however, into non-traditional family units, respondents of differing socio-economic backgrounds and the intense tensions and negative dynamics arising from sudden inescapable ‘togetherness’, which is not entirely demonstrated (or confessed) in this small sample. Likewise, we call for more critical work on the methodological approaches to collective family and other social research, and the inevitable challenges this offers.

## References

- Armstrong, M. I., Birnie-Lefcovitch, S., & Ungar, M. T. (2005). Pathways between social support, family well being, quality of parenting, and child resilience: What we know. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 14(2), 269-281.
- Astedt-Kurki, P., Paavilainen, E. & Lehti, K. (2001). Methodological issues in interviewing families in family nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 35(2), 288-293.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W.H. Freeman.
- Blichfeldt, B. S., Pedersen, B. M., Johansen, A., & Hansen, L. (2011). Tweens on holidays: In-situ decision-making from children's perspective. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 11(2), 135-149.
- Brymer, E., & Schweitzer, R. (2013). Extreme sports are good for your health: A phenomenological understanding of fear and anxiety in extreme sport. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 18(4), 477-487.
- Buckley, R. (2012). Rush as a key motivation in skilled adventure tourism: Resolving the risk recreation paradox. *Tourism Management*, 33(4), 961-970.
- Campbell, D. (2018, November 22). Why do more young people have mental health problems? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com>
- Clough, P., Houge Mackenzie, S., Mallabon, L., & Brymer, E. (2016). Adventurous physical activity environments: A mainstream intervention for mental health. *Sports Medicine*, 46(7), 963-968.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1975). *Beyond boredom and anxiety*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Dodge, R., Daly, A. P., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. D. (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2(3), 222-235.
- Fendt, L. S., & Wilson, E. (2012). 'I just push through the barriers because I live for surfing': How women negotiate their constraints in surf tourism. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 15(1), 4-18.
- Fletcher, E., & Prince, H. (2017). Steering a course towards eudaimonia: The effects of sail training on well-being character. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 17(3), 179-190.
- Freeman, P.A. & Zabriskie, R.B. (2002). The role of outdoor recreation in family enrichment. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 2(2), 131-145.
- Gottschalk, S. (2018). *The terminal self: Everyday life in hypermodern times*. Routledge.
- Goodenough, A., Waite, S., & Bartlett, J. (2015). Families in the forest: Guilt trips, bonding moments and potential springboards. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 18(3), 377-396.
- Gram, M. (2005). Family holidays. A qualitative analysis of family holiday experiences. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 5(1), 2-22.
- Hebblethwaite, S. & Norris, J. (2011). Expressions of generativity through family leisure: Experiences of grandparents and adult grandchildren. *Family Relations*, 60(1), 121-133.
- Hilbrecht, M., Shaw, S. M., & Delamere, F. M. & Havitz, M. E. (2008). Experiences, perspectives, and meanings of family vacations for children. *Leisure/Loisir*, 32(2), 545-571.
- Holm, M. R., Lugosi, P., Croes, R. R., & Torres, E. N. (2017). Risk-tourism, risk-taking and subjective well-being: A review and synthesis. *Tourism Management*, 63, 115-122.

- Hornberger, L. B., Zabriskie, R. B., & Freeman, P. (2010). Contributions of family leisure to family functioning among single parent families. *Leisure Sciences*, 32(2), 143-161.
- Houge Mackenzie, S. & Brymer, E. (2018). Conceptualizing adventurous nature sport: A positive psychology perspective, *Annals of Leisure Research*. Advance online publication. [doi-org.hallam.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/11745398.2018.1483733](https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2018.1483733)
- Huff, C., Widmer, M., McCoy, K., & Hill, B. (2003). The influence of challenging outdoor recreation on parent-adolescent communication. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 37(1), 18-37.
- Huta, V., & Waterman, A. (2014). Eudaimonia and its distinction from hedonia: Developing a classification and terminology for understanding conceptual and operational definitions. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15(6), 1425-1456.
- Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2015). Kids on board: Methodological challenges, concerns and clarifications when including young children's voices in tourism research. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 18(9), 845-858.
- Larsen, J. R. K. (2013). Family flow: The pleasures of "being together" in a holiday home. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 13(3), 153-174.
- Lehto, X. Y., Choi, S., Lin, Y., & MacDermid, S. M. (2009). Vacation and family functioning. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(3), 459-479.
- Lewis, N. (2000). The climbing body, nature and the experience of modernity. *Body & Society*, 6(3-4), 58-80.
- Litvin, S. W., Xu, G., & Kang, S. K. (2004). Spousal vacation-buying decision making revisited across time and place. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(2), 193-198.
- Macleod, D. I., & Welton, G. (1984). Building character in the American boy: The boy scouts, YMCA, and their forerunners. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 16(4), 358-359.
- McLanahan, S., & Adams, J. (1987). Parenthood and psychological well-being. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 13(1), 237-257.
- Moretti, M. M., & Peled, M. (2004). Adolescent-parent attachment: Bonds that support healthy development. *Paediatrics & Child Health*, 9(8), 551-555.
- Mykletun, R.J. & Mazza, L. (2016). Psychosocial benefits from participating in an adventure expedition race. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 6(5), 542-564.
- Noor, N., Ghandi, A., Ismahalil, I., & Saodah, W. (2014). Development of indicators for family well-being in Malaysia. *Social Indicators Research*, 115(1), 279-318.
- Obrador, P. (2012). The place of the family in tourism research: Domesticity and thick sociality by the pool. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(1), 401-420.
- O'Keeffe, G. S., & Clarke-Pearson, K. (2011). The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. *Pediatrics*, 127(4), 800-804.
- Patterson, I. & Pan, R. (2007). The motivations of baby boomers to participate in adventure tourism and the implications for adventure tourism providers. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 10(1), 26-53.
- Pink, S. (2012). *Advances in visual methodology*. Los Angeles, Calif; London: Sage.
- Pomfret, G. (2012). Personal emotional journeys associated with adventure activities on packaged mountaineering holidays. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 4, 145-154.
- Pomfret, G. & Bramwell, B. (2014). The characteristics and motivational decisions of outdoor adventure tourists: A review and analysis. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(14), 1447-1478.
- Pomfret, G. (2019). Conceptualising family adventure tourists' motives, experiences and benefits. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*. Advance online publication. [doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2018.10.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2018.10.004)

- Rahmani, K., Gnoth, J. & Mather, D. (2018). Hedonic and eudaimonic well-being: A psycholinguistic view. *Tourism Management*, 69, 155-166.
- Ritchie, J., & Spencer, L. (1994). Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research. In A. Bryman, & R.G. Burgess (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data* (pp.173-194). Taylor & Francis Books Ltd.
- Schänzel, H. A. (2010). Whole-family research: Towards a methodology in tourism for encompassing generation, gender and group dynamic perspectives. *Tourism Analysis*, 15(5), 555-569.
- Schänzel, H.A. & Smith, K.A. (2014). The socialisation of families away from home: Group dynamics and family functioning on holiday. *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 36(2), 126-143.
- Schänzel, H.A. & Yeoman, I. (2015). Trends in family tourism. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 1(2), 141-147.
- Sirgy, M. J. (2002). *The psychology of quality of life*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.
- Simmel, G. (2012). The metropolis and mental life (1903). In: J. Lin & C. Mele (Eds.) *The urban sociology reader* (pp. 37-45). Routledge.
- Staempfli, M.B. (2009). Re-introducing adventure into children's outdoor play environments. *Environment and Behavior*, 41(2), 268-280.
- Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Kaler, M., & Oishi, S. (2006). Meaning in life questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53(1), 80-93.
- Townsend, J. A., Van Puymbroeck, M., & Zabriskie, R. B. (2017). The core and balance model of family leisure functioning: A systematic review. *Leisure Sciences*, 39(5), 436-456.
- Virilio, P. (2005). *The information bomb* (Vol. 10). Verso.
- Voigt, C. (2017). Employing hedonia and eudaimonia to explore differences between the three groups of wellness tourists on the experiential, the motivational and the global level. In: S. Filep, J. Laing & M. Csikszentmihalyi (Eds.) *Positive tourism* (pp. 105-121). Routledge.
- Warren, A. (2017). Citizens of the empire: Baden-Powell, scouts and guides, and an imperial ideal. In: J. M. MacKenzie (Ed.) *Imperialism and popular culture* (pp.232-256). Manchester University Press.
- Wajcman, J. (2015). *Pressed for time: The acceleration of life in digital capitalism*. University of Chicago Press.
- Yardley, L. (2017). Demonstrating the validity of qualitative research. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 295-296.
- Zabriskie, R. B., & McCormick, B. P. (2001). The influences of family leisure patterns on perceptions of family functioning. *Family Relations*, 50(3), 281-289.