

THESIS TITLE:

**A Dualistic Approach to Leisure Activity Engagement –
On The Dynamics of Passion, Escapism, and Life Satisfaction**

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GENERAL SUMMARY

In three papers, the present thesis examined the applicability of psychological theories on motivation in a leisure activity engagement context. It is argued that research on leisure motivation could benefit from a less contextual and a more idiosyncratic perspective on leisure activities.

The concept of *activity affordances* is presented in order to highlight the person-activity fit that takes place when a certain activity is approached. This concept suggests that activities with different attributes may offer the same psychological experiences as well as proposing that individuals may approach identical activities with different mindsets depending on their well-being, need satisfaction motives, personality characteristics, and so on. These motivational dynamics that evolve between the person and the activity is the primary objective of the present thesis.

In these three papers, the Dualistic Model of Passion is investigated in a leisure context. This model is dualistic in the sense that it proposes two distinctively different motivational constructs in relation to passionate engagement in activities. Specifically, the Passion model includes *harmonious passion*, a motivation which originates from an autonomous interest in an activity that leads to positive emotions and general well-being, and *obsessive passion*, which stems from a controlled internalization of the activity that undermines flexible engagement in the activity and constitutes a threat to well-being.

In addition, the present thesis includes the development of another dualistic model in relation to leisure activity engagement that pertains to motives to escape from the self through investing interest in an activity. Two dimensions of escapism were proposed: *self-suppression* and *self-expansion*. Self-suppression escapism derives from motivation to avoid negative evaluation of self by getting focused on an activity, whereas self-expansion is motivated from facilitations of positive experiences by getting immersed in an activity. The results supported the theoretical proposals, showing that these two dimensions have different determinants and outcomes. Self-suppression was related to ill-being and poor psychological adjustment, whereas self-expansion was related to flexible activity engagement and positive affective outcomes.

The findings from the studies in the present thesis give conditional support for a motivational dualism in leisure activity engagement. Harmonious passion and self-expansion were related to positive affective outcomes and subjective well-being, whereas obsessive passion and self-suppression were related to general and activity-related negative affect, poor psychological adjustment, and intrapersonal conflicts regarding the resources invested in the activity. The Passion model and the Escapism model complemented each other in terms of affective outcomes from activity engagement.

In sum, these findings show that leisure activity engagement can be conducive to well-being, but also, and in contrast to the traditional view upon leisure activity engagement, that leisure activities also may pose a threat to life satisfaction.

LIST OF PAPERS

Stenseng, F. (2008). The two faces of leisure activity engagement: Harmonious and obsessive passion in relation to intrapersonal conflict and life domain outcomes. *Leisure Sciences*, 30, 465-478.

Stenseng, F, Rise, J., & Kraft P. (2009). The dark side of leisure: Obsessive passion and its covariates and outcomes. *Leisure Studies* (In review).

Stenseng, F, Rise, J., & Kraft P. (2009). Two dimensions of escapism: Self-suppression and self-expansion. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (In review).

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definitions of Leisure

The concept of *leisure* can be traced back to the Ancient Greece, where philosophers like Plato and Aristotle regarded leisure as an ideal state of being devoted to contemplation, discourse, and self-expression (Kleiber, 1999). Typical leisure activities in Athens around 400 B.C. included gymnastics, reading and writing poems, and various play pursuits. In other words, they were not much different from popular leisure engagements nearly two and a half millennia later.

Modern definitions of leisure deviate from those of Plato and Aristotle in the way that they often define leisure as opposed to time devoted for work. In the aftermath of the industrial revolution – and the growth of societies which in many ways suppressed humans' volitional initiative and thwarted their sense of freedom - leisure time was seen as an increasingly unique and valuable part of people's lives. In line with this post-industrial understanding of leisure, Russel (2005, p. 32) defines leisure as “time available after obligations” and “the residual time that remains after such tasks as work, study, and personal maintenance are completed”. However, this definition illustrates a weakness in the mainstream conceptualization of leisure. Typical definitions of the leisure domain are based on *what it is not*, and not on *what it is*. However, this might be a consequence of the complexity of leisure. Leisure time is spent in so many ways that it is hard to capture some essence or general aspects of how individuals choose to use their time off from obligations.

Contemporary leisure research is an interdisciplinary field including sociology, anthropology, sport sciences, and psychology. Several journals are dedicated to the publication of research papers on leisure (Leisure Sciences, Leisure Studies, Journal of Leisure Research), and papers presented in these journals contain a wide array of philosophical and methodological viewpoints. Despite that leisure is mostly conceived as a personal affair, the number of studies on leisure from a psychological perspective is relatively few. If leisure is a “state of mind” (Russel, 2005), I suggest that it is time to try to describe this state of mind in light of psychological theories. I believe that when we start to investigate leisure behavior from a

psychological viewpoint, we will be in a position to define what leisure is, and not only what it is not.

1.2 Leisure as One of Life's Domains

Leisure time is for most people more or less filled with different types of structured activities. These activities can range from cultural activities, such as going to the movies, reading books, and painting, to sports activities like jogging, playing football, and parachuting. Different types of spiritual experiences may also qualify as leisure activities: going to the church and joining Yoga-lessons may both fit conventional definitions of leisure. These examples illustrate that leisure activities vary a lot on the contextual level, but importantly, they seem to have a common denominator: they are psychologically rewarding. In the context of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), leisure activities should have a positive impact on life satisfaction, and several studies imply such a relationship. In addition to offering the individual stimulating experiences when engaging in the activity, engagement in leisure activities seems to have a spill-over effect on general well-being (Edginton, De Graaf, Dieser, & Edginton, 2006). According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), activity engagements that are motivated out of autonomous reasons will facilitate need satisfaction and positive affect. So, if leisure is "time left after obligations", then leisure activities should at least be nutritious in terms of self-actualization and optimal functioning.

A study by Vallerand et al. (2003) shows the prominent role that leisure activities play in people's lives. When asking college students to define their *favorite activity*, a large majority named activities that traditionally belong to the leisure domain. However, having a favorite activity might not only be a blessing. Like most things in life that are psychologically stimulating, some people tend to get an increased craving for it. The literature on leisure has mostly taken for granted that leisure activity engagements represent an exclusively positive part of people's lives. Studies on leisure and life satisfaction have mostly focused on the obstacles to leisure, and have discussed the negative effects from not having time and possibilities to engage in leisure activities. Not many have explored the negative effects of devoting too much time to leisure activities. But if one allows including e.g. gambling and drug use into the leisure concept through the favorite activity concept, then it becomes evident

that leisure time is not only spent in activities known to be positive for the individual in the long run.

On a meta-level, I suggest that a *life domain perspective* may be helpful in order to highlight the potential harms of excessive leisure activity engagement. What is regarded as a life domain is very dependent on one's personal arrangement of life's activities, relations, and contexts. A life domain might be defined on basis of specific surroundings, like one's home or work, or by other people, like friends and family, or specific activities. In an unpublished study on life domains (Stenseng & Dyrdal, 2009), we let participants in a random sample themselves define what they regarded as their most important life domains. They were allowed to name up to five different life domains. Not surprisingly, the most typical domains were work, family, and leisure.

Although the characteristics, the number, and the importance of domains must be regarded as a personal issue, most people have one thing in common: these domains are constantly tapping from the same sources of energy, time, and money available in our lives. We only possess a limited number of hours pr. day, and we have to attend to our daily and weekly obligations to function in a modern society. This matter of *limited resources* entails that we constantly have to regulate the resources invested into the different life domains. In this context, the leisure domain constitutes a potential source of conflict and distress when having a craving to unconditionally allocate large portions of resources into a leisure activity.

On the other hand, a life domain perspective on leisure may also highlight the uniqueness of the leisure domain in opposition to other life domains. Humans are determined to dedicate their resources to activities that have some sort of contingencies attached to them (Deci & Ryan, 2000). People's appreciation of leisure activities and their strong motivation to engage in them indicate that these activities offer inputs that are less available in other life domains. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) suggests that optimal functioning depends on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Applied to a leisure activity context, the satisfaction of individuals' need for autonomy (deCharms, 1968) involves the experience of engaging in an activity for intrinsic reasons, and that engagement in the activity is in accordance with one's personal goals and values. The satisfaction of the need for competence (White, 1969) involves a feeling of being capable of

mastering the challenges the activity brings, and about perceiving some sort of progression through one's engagement in the activity. The need for relatedness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) pertains to the experience of being included in a social context, and applied to people's favorite activities this implies that one feels close to individuals that one cares for and is appreciated by when engaged in the activity. Several studies have shown that autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction are closely attached to well-being (see Deci & Ryan, 2000) In accordance with the leisure-domain approach, one of the reasons that leisure activities are so highly appreciated may be that they contribute uniquely to the satisfaction of these three basic psychological needs.

In sum, the negotiation among life domains that goes on in people's lives is what I define as *Life balance*. Leisure activities can clearly contribute to life satisfaction, but the positive effect may be attenuated by life domain conflicts. On the other hand, the different life domains are ideally complementary to each other in terms of basic need satisfaction. Life balance is experienced when all life domains contribute in the direction of need satisfaction without inflicting intra- and interpersonal conflicts regarding the resources invested in the different domains.

1.3 Individual Variations in Leisure Activity Engagement

As mentioned above, the generalizability of leisure research might be threatened by the wide range of activities that people engage in during leisure time. Doing research is about making sense of seemingly hidden and chaotic information through systematic inspections, analyses, and syntheses. Research should help us categorize and predict patterns and outcomes in the real world. If one focuses on the attributes of typical leisure activities, it may seem impossible to grasp some common features from the behavior that are exercised in those different activities. Apart from being activities performed when having "time off from obligations", they include physically challenging sports like football and skiing, and physically non-challenging activities like playing chess and reading books.

From a psychological point of view, it is my opinion that leisure activities differ widely at the contextual level, but that engagement in seemingly different activities possesses commonness in terms of the idiosyncratic experiences that derives from engaging in them; for example the

promotion of positive affect. Conversely, the motivation that leads to the engagement may share similarities independent of the activity itself, in the same way as individuals engage in the same activity for different reasons and experience different outcomes from the same activity.

Baumeister (1991) points out in his book *Escaping the Self: Alcoholism, Spirituality, Masochism, and Other Flights from the Burden of Selfhood*, that several activities offers the experience of escape from self. The experience of escapism is based on mental narrowing, which is typical for engagement in a vast range of activities. Baumeister describes the mental states of long-distance runners and individuals with eating disorders in terms of mental narrowing through the tolerance of pain. In both cases, pain is accepted as a necessary obstacle towards a higher-order goal. Individuals with eating disorders learn to ignore hunger for several days in order to loose weight while long-distance runners know that progression is attained by repeatedly pushing the body to its limits.

Likewise, individuals playing on the same football team may participate for very different reasons. Some of the team members may be in it mainly to experience the thrill of winning, some for the positive outcomes from physical activity, and others because they simply feel obliged to participate. In turn, the outcomes experienced from the engagement will be dependent on the motivation the individuals had for playing with the team. If one participates mainly to experience the thrill of winning, then losing the game may be followed by feelings of anger and disappointment. If one participates in order to gain better health, then winning the game is a subordinate goal, and the psychological state after the game might be characterized by joy and vitality despite loosing the match. In line with numerous findings on the human psyche – the motives for engagement moderate the psychological outcomes. Despite being an extensively scrutinized phenomenon in psychology, there are few conceptualizations of these idiosyncratic aspects of activity engagement in the leisure literature.

1.4 Activity-Person fit – The Concept of Activity Affordances

The lack of psychological theory in the leisure literature may be a reason for the sparse investigations on *why* and *how* people pursue a “favorite” activity in leisure time. One could

hardly imagine that it is arbitrary what kind of leisure activity a person chooses to invest time, money, and energy in. In most modern societies there is a broad set of available leisure activities, so why do people approach specific activities in a habitual manner? Why do some people play tennis every Wednesday and Saturday, while others spend their Thursday and Sunday afternoon playing poker with friends? Obviously, it could be argued that some individuals are actually doing both activities during a typical week, but previous findings on this field of research support the idea of a hierarchical valuation of leisure activities. In the study by Vallerand et al. (2003), where people were asked to name their favorite activity, the average time spent pr. week in the activity was 8.4 hours. Later studies on people's favorite activities have reported mean values of around ten hours (Vallerand, Rousseau, Grouzet, Dumais, Grenier, & Blanchard, 2006; Vallerand, et al., 2007). That such an amount of time is devoted to people's favorite activity indicates that the activity has a special position in their everyday lives, and that the activity is not one of several activities of a similar character.

I believe that the relationship that develops and evolves between a person and a favorite activity can be understood in terms of *activity affordances*. This concept is inspired by the cognitive psychologist J.J Gibson (1979) working in the field of visual perception. Gibson criticized traditional cognitivism to be too top-down oriented, in the sense that the mind "creates" the world. Gibson claimed that there is much more information available in our surroundings than we are aware of, and that the world offers a wide array of possibilities dependent on our attention. Gibson (1979) called his theory an *ecological approach* to emphasize that the primary function of perception is to facilitate interactions between the individual and the environment. He claimed that humans act on the environment based on its *affordances*, which means that the environment has available a vast range of possible actions. Fortunately, we have innate tendencies to perceive some affordances in a similar way. For example, a ladder "affords" ascent or descent and a chair "affords" sitting. At the same time, the same object may be perceived as having dissimilar affordances depending on the characteristics of the individual. Identical object might present very different affordances in different cultural contexts.

In the same way as Gibson argues that objects projects affordances, I suggest that activities also projects affordances. However, instead of focusing on explicit attributes of objects, the affordances of activities should be understood in terms of the different psychological experiences that can be derived from approaching them. As noted above, engagement in the

same activity might lead to very different psychological outcomes. The act of playing football might be approached for many different reasons, like to exercise, to be with friends, or to enhance self-esteem. I suggest that each of these experiences can be labeled as activity affordances, and that they motivate the individual to engage in the activity. Sometimes one engages primarily to utilize a single affordance, and other times one exploits several of the affordances incorporated in an activity. Activities also differ in what kind of affordances they possess and how easily accessible they are. Playing poker does not offer the affordance of increased fitness, whereas mountain hiking do not offer the affordance of competition. Conversely, many seemingly different activities offer the same affordances to the individual. For instance, the flow experience can be perceived as an affordance in such different activities like chess, snowboarding, PC-gaming, and playing drums in a rock band.

In addition to suggesting that activities offer different set of affordances, I suggest that individuals differ in their motivational focus regarding which affordances to utilize. For example, studies have demonstrated that people differ in their competitiveness and in their sociability (Costa & McCrae, 1992). I believe that people high in competitiveness are drawn to activities with competition as an affordance, in the same way as people high in sociability are drawn to team sports. This might explain why some individuals find “favorite activities” and stick to them for years. They find an activity with affordances that matches their preferences regarding psychological experiences.

However, we know that the interest and motivational intensity for engaging in an activity can vary. It is therefore important to take into account that there might be some personal dynamics in the utilization of an activity. For example, if one’s self-esteem is degraded in one or several life domains outside the activity, it might become increasingly important to exploit the “competence” affordance in one’s favorite activity to compensate for the loss of general self-esteem. Similarly, if one feels closely related to those persons one interacts with in a teams sport context, the need for sociability in other life domains might diminish. This perspective constitutes the theoretical fundament of the current thesis.

2.0 PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES RELEVANT FOR LEISURE ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT

2.1 Theories on Leisure Motivation

Leisure researchers have been describing motivation for leisure engagement from several scientific viewpoints. Some of these suggestions are heavily context-related, like the overview made by Driver and Brown (1986; in Edginton et al. 2006), including categories such as “enjoying nature”, “outdoor learning”, and “family kinship”. Others are more inspired by sociological theory, which is evident in some of the categories of leisure motivation presented by Tinsley, Teaf, and Colb (in Edginton et al. 2006), including “sense of power/control” and “service to others”, besides the more psychologically laden motives described as “self-expression” and “stimulation”. Also relevant is the taxonomy of leisure motivation by Cheek and Burch (1976; in Edginton et al. 2006). They propose that leisure motivation stems from three categories of needs to be met in leisure engagement, namely sociological (e.g. comparison, identity, communication), psychological (e.g. sensation-seeking, confidence), and physical (e.g. fitness, skills, strength). Together, these examples illustrates the wide set of leisure motives incorporated in the current literature.

Edginton and colleagues (2006) write in their book *Leisure and Life Satisfaction* that “*people pursue leisure opportunities for different reasons and with different levels of intensity, depending on their needs, values, and attitudes at any given time*”. Despite this apparent acknowledgment of the multifaceted aspects of leisure engagement, current theories explicitly addressing leisure motivation offer few elaborations on this issue. As argued above, I believe that by applying psychological theories on this field of research we will come closer to the core of leisure motivation. Theories on human motivation have a long history in psychology, and some of these are potentially relevant for leisure activity engagement. However, most theories on human motivation have been investigated on a general level and not in relation to specific activities. Empirical investigations on motivation have traditionally been experimental and carried out in laboratory settings, and the findings from these studies have subsequently been generalized to apply to human behavior under real life conditions. The present thesis is an attempt to bridge the gap between traditional research on motivation and engagement in specific activities of a habitual character. I believe that the latent nature of

human motivation is investigable in these kinds of settings, and maybe even more accessible in relation to highly valued activities compared to artificial tasks performed by randomly assigned participants in a constrained context.

In the following, I will present two theories on human motivation that link psychological processes to specific activities, namely the Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand, Rousseau, Grouzet, Dumais, Grenier, & Blanchard, 2006; Vallerand, et al., 2007) and the Two-Dimensional Model of Escapism, which has been developed in the present thesis (see paper 3). As their titles reveal, both theories entails a dualistic approach to activity engagement. In both theories there is one path that is seen as conducive to well-being, and another path that is seen as maladaptive in terms of self-regulation which is related to different types of conflicts and negative outcomes. I believe that admitting that not all leisure activity engagements follows the same line of progression is helpful in order to capture the whole aspect of leisure activity engagement, not only the part traditionally exposed in the leisure literature.

2.2 The Dualistic Model of Passion

The Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand, Rousseau, Grouzet, Dumais, Grenier, & Blanchard, 2006; Vallerand, et al., 2007) addresses individual diversity in relation to motivation for engagement in activities. Empirical investigations of the model are based upon individuals' descriptions of their experiences in relation to their favorite activity, or more specifically, an activity that they define as a passion, that they like, that are important to them, and in which they spend a significant amount of time on a regular basis. The model distinguishes between two dimensions of engagement in activities that correspond to these criteria. Harmonious passion is described as an autonomous, balanced, and dynamic engagement in one's favorite activity, whereas obsessive passion is described as a controlled, conflicted, and inflexible type of activity engagement. Studies have found harmonious passion to be related to positive affect (Vallerand et al., 2003; Mageau & Vallerand, 2007), and adaptive psychological adjustment (Amiot, Vallerand, & Blanchard, 2006). In a more general context, harmonious passion has also been found to predict life satisfaction (Vallerand et al., 2007). However, many of these studies also found obsessive passion to be related to the opposite of these constructs, that is, negative affect (Vallerand et al., 2003) and maladaptive

adjustment (Amiot et al., 2006). In other words, having a passion activity may be conducive to well-being, but for some individuals, engagement in seemingly healthy activities induces negative psychological consequences.

The Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al., 2003; 2006; 2007) has recently gained additional power through a number of studies investigating its applicability in different populations such as professional dancers (Rip, Fortin, & Vallerand, 2006), dramatic art students (Vallerand et al., 2007), and different categories of athletes including basketball players, water polo players, synchronized swimmers (Vallerand et al., 2006) and hockey players (Amiot et al., 2006). Most of the findings are compatible with the model's theoretical assumptions in terms of the proposed dualism of passion towards activities. The theoretical background of the model derives from the principles regarding internalization of behavior as outlined by self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). In SDT, internalization refers to the integration of values, beliefs, and attitudes from the environment into the self, and thereby constitutes an important part of the process of socialization. Thus, when certain activities are internalized into the self, they may become central parts of one's identity. As one may have observed, when a teenager is learning to play rock guitar, this often initiates a transformation involving change of clothing, hairdo, language, and so on. As time goes by, the persistent teenager is no longer merely just playing the guitar, but eventually becomes a "guitar player". When the activity has been transformed from being an action to being stated as a personal feature, then the internalization process has run its course. As shown in previous studies (Vallerand, 1997; see also Deci & Ryan, 2000), values and regulations concerning activities can be internalized into one's identity in either a controlled or an autonomous fashion.

The Dualistic Model of Passion proposes that obsessive passion stems from a controlled internalization of the passion activity, while harmonious passion stems from an autonomous internalization of the activity into one's identity. A controlled internalization is posited to derive from intrapersonal or social pressure, like performing to be rewarded, to enhance self-esteem, or because the excitement experienced through the activity takes control over the individual and leads to a more excessive involvement in the activity. Vallerand and his coworkers (2006) found support for the existence of these two distinctive ways of internalization in relation to passion activities. In a study on recreational athletes they found that harmonious passion was related to an autonomous personality orientation, whereas

obsessive passion was related to a controlled personality orientation. Since personality orientations are likely to be stable over time, these findings support the idea that the way the activity has been internalized is a highly relevant predictor for the development of harmonious or obsessive passion. Furthermore, individual differences regarding internalization may explain several of the consequences that are observed in relation to the two types of passion. A controlled internalization helps explain a compulsive pattern of activity engagement and its negative consequences, including lack of positive affect (Vallerand et al., 2003) and addiction-like psychological effects when prevented from engagement in the activity (Mageau & Vallerand, 2007; Vallerand et al., 2003, study 1). When internalizing an activity for causes beyond one's own, one seems to lose the intrinsically driven initiative that supports healthy engagement in the activity. In contrast, when internalizing the activity freely without any contingencies attached to it, this seems to assure the positive spin-offs observed in relation to harmonious passion, including positive affect (Vallerand et al. 2003) and subjective well-being (Vallerand et al., 2007).

2.3 Passion and Well-being

The relationship between passion and well-being has been explored in several studies on the Passion Model. Vallerand et al. (2003, study 1) found positive correlations between harmonious passion and self-reported positive emotions experienced after activity engagement in a sample of college-students, whereas obsessive passion correlated positively with measures of negative cognitions and negative affect when individuals were prevented from engaging in their passion activity. Furthermore, in a sample of football players, Vallerand et al. (2003, study 2) found that harmonious passion predicted increased levels of general positive affect at the end of the football season as compared to the beginning of the season, whereas obsessive passion predicted increased general negative affect during the same period. Surprisingly, despite the increased negative affect reported by players with a dominantly obsessive approach towards the activity, only obsessive passion predicted intentions to proceed with the activity the following season. The authors discussed these findings in light of the rigid persistence that may evolve when internalizing an activity for non-autonomous reasons.

This line of interpretation of the forces behind the two types of passion is also supported by the findings made by Amiot, Vallerand, & Blanchard (2006). They applied a longitudinal design (3 waves) to investigations of psychological adjustment in relation to harmonious and obsessive passion. Participants were elite hockey players who at pre-season were tried out for teams in a highly competitive league. At this point the players responded to measures of passion and psychological adjustment (a composite score including life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, and affective states), which constituted Time 1 in the study. Individuals were placed into passion categories as either harmonious or obsessive based on their mean scores on the subscales of the Passion Scale at T1. At Time 2, the participants had either been selected or rejected by the top-level teams on the basis of their performance in the try-out period. As expected, players selected for highly competitive teams showed better psychological adjustment than those who were rejected. Two months later (Time 3) a more differentiated pattern was observed. Harmonious individuals selected for highly competitive teams showed decreased psychological adjustment relative to T2, whereas harmonious individuals playing in less competitive teams showed increased psychological adjustment. In contrast, obsessive players chosen for highly competitive teams showed better psychological adjustment at T3 relative to obsessive individuals playing in less competitive teams.

These results support the interpretation of passion as dependent on the context in which it unfolds. Concordance or conflict between the type of passion one has developed for one's favorite activity and the demands of the environment jointly predicts psychological outcomes. In other words, if one belongs to an environment that fully accepts an obsessive approach to activity engagement, then no detrimental effects on well-being might be present. Likewise, being a harmonious individual in an obsessive environment, this conflict might attenuate or evaporate the positive effects on well-being expected from this approach to the activity.

2.4 Passion in a Life Domain Context

As mentioned previously, the definition of passion activities may count for many leisure activities. In line with passion activities, people describe their leisure activities as activities that they like, that are important to them, and in which they spend a significant amount of time on a regular basis (Edginton et al., 2006). As Vallerand et al. argue (2003), an internalization process provides that the passion activity becomes a part of one's identity; it

becomes a personal feature which one carries with oneself in different contexts. Combined with a high degree of engagement, this implies that passion for a leisure activity affects life outside the activity itself.

From a life domain perspective, being passionate about a leisure activity may have both positive and negative spill-over effects on the different domains of one's life. Approaching the activity in a harmonious manner may assure engagement that is nutritious for need satisfaction, positive affect, and subsequently for general well-being. The individual will be able to regulate the resources put into the activity in a way that fits to a broader scope of obligations situated in other life-domains. The positive outcomes of engaging in the activity are experienced and highly valued, but because the individual is in control of the passion these personal incentives will be postponed when apprehending a need to invest resources into other life domains. In this way, harmonious passion for a leisure activity will function as a continuous contribution to life balance.

In contrast, obsessive passion for an activity is derived from a controlled internalization of the activity, which in turn leads to a less autonomous and flexible engagement. Since the engagement in the activity is less rooted in one's own interest and preferences, the obsessive individual will experience problems in relation to the exertion of control of the engagement. On an applied level, such an approach towards a leisure activity may lead to conflicts regarding the resources which are invested in the activity. When the activity takes control over the individual, as described by Vallerand et al. (2003), the strong interest feeds on resources that may have been invested into other life domains. Obsessive passion may therefore inflict conflicts of both an intrapersonal and interpersonal level. As a result, an obsessive engagement in the leisure activity will be detrimental to life balance and general well-being.

2.5 The Two-Dimensional Model of Escapism

Escapism is a rarely seen term in psychology texts. Even in the *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* (Colman, 2001) - which contains more than 10,500 entries - the word "escapism" is not included. Is this because escapism is not a psychological phenomenon? Probably not, but I suppose the term often has been judged as too ethereal to be scrutinized on the realm of

modern psychology. However, although theoretical elaborations of the term have been sparse, the work by Baumeister (1990, 1991) on *escape from self* is highly relevant for the approach to activity engagements taken in the present thesis. Baumeister links the act of escaping self to engagement in specific behaviors. In his article titled *Suicide as Escape from Self* (1990), Baumeister presents a causal chain which eventually may lead to suicide or suicide attempts. This chain starts with events where the individual fails to live up to own and/or others' standards and expectations. These events are attributed internally, which thereby leads to decreased self-worth. This condition makes self-awareness painful and therefore intentions to avoid self-evaluation evolve. Then, the person will search for actions that reduce self-evaluation to escape this painful state, more explicitly, approach situations and acts which entail *cognitive narrowing*. Cognitive narrowing is characterized by i.e. proximal goals, concrete thinking, distorted time perception, and cognitive rigidity. Baumeister argues that suicide ideation is one way to enter a state of cognitive narrowing, in the sense that the mere act of suicide demands planning and performance of concrete actions. In this way, suicide becomes an escape from self both on a psychological and physiological level. Baumeister also argues that other harmful and seemingly irrational acts can be derived from the need to escape from self, like binge eating, sexual masochism, and drug abuse (Baumeister, 1990, 1991).

In the present thesis, we propose a new conceptualization of escapism in relation to activity engagements. More specifically, we present a two-dimensional model of escapism which goes further in direction of arguing that different behaviors can be interpreted as an escape from self. We argue that cognitive narrowing may be experienced in relation to engagement in many activities, including activities seen as healthy to the individual. In fact, many leisure activities may be said to contain activity affordances in order to promote the experience of cognitive narrowing. In relation to engagement in leisure activities, we propose that cognitive narrowing is obtained through *action attention*. Action attention is characterized by a state where the individual experiences 1) *task absorption*, 2) *temporary dissociation*, and 3) *reduced self-evaluation*. Together, these psychological experiences work in the direction of the individual experiencing an escape from self. It may be said to characterize the mere "state of escape", and therefore, we suggest that escapism can be investigated in relation to leisure activities.

Action attention is associated with cognitive narrowing in the sense that it reduces self-awareness in directing focus on concrete actions, proximal goals, and limited aspects of self.

However, unlike Baumeister's conceptualization of escapism, we suggest that this condition should not always be conceived as negative to the individual. The experience of action attention is not harmful in itself. To illustrate this, we argue that there are several similarities between cognitive narrowing and the flow state as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). The flow state is argued to be attained through engagement in different activities such as sports, arts and even work. Csikszentmihalyi identifies nine factors as accompanying an experience of flow: 1) clear goals, 2) concentrating and focusing, 3) loss of the feeling of self-consciousness, 4) distorted sense of time, 5) direct and immediate feedback, 6) balance between ability level and challenges, 7) a sense of control, 8) intrinsically rewarding, 9) general immersion in the activity. Several of these factors may be argued to resemble the description of cognitive narrowing made by Baumeister (1990, 1991), like clear goals, loss of self-consciousness, and distorted time perception. These similarities may seem paradoxical: whereas cognitive narrowing is related to self-destructive behaviors like suicide and eating disorder, the flow state is seen exclusively as a positive experience conducive to well-being. In other words, the utilization of the activity affordance of action attention may give very different outcomes.

The Two-Dimensional Model of Escapism makes use of Regulatory Focus Theory (RFT; Higgins, 1998) to explain why action attention can be related to both ill-being and well-being. Based on the hedonic principle that people approach pleasure and avoid pain, RFT states that behaviors performed to obtain well-being origins from two very different motivational directions, namely promotion focus or prevention focus. A *promotion focus* directs individuals towards the obtainment of their superior standards and ideals. Promotion focus motivates the person towards nurturance of the self and to allocate attention towards the positive outcomes of a desired end-state. In contrast, motivation incited from a *prevention focus* leads the individual towards obtainment of concordance between one's actions and perceived duties and obligations. Engagement based on prevention focus draws one's attention towards the inhibition of negative outcomes related to a potential failure of reaching a desired end-state. A prevention focus complies with motivation to protect the self from threats towards its unity and stability.

Inspired by the hedonic principle incorporated in Regulatory Focus Theory, we suggest that individuals differ in their self-regulatory viewpoint with regards to intentions to engage in escape-facilitating activities. Specifically, while one person can approach action attention to

promote the achievement of prospective positive experiences in activity engagement, another person might engage in order to prevent thinking on precedent negative experiences or prospective challenges. The goal of obtaining the state of action attention through activity engagement will be similar for both persons and both will be concerned with the temporary enhancement of well being. However, their initiative for entering the pleasant state of escape is instigated from very different standpoints. The promotion-guided person engages in order to attain positive affect, whereas the prevention-guided person will engage in order to experience absence of negative affect.

A promotion focus in escapist engagement will be accompanied by a favourable anticipation of the positive experiences attainable through getting immersed in the activity. The activity is viewed upon as a self-developing opportunity which offers complementary experiences compared to other important activities in life. Individuals with a promotion focus are inclined to evaluate their engagement in their favorite activity in a positive manner, both regarding the situational outcomes in terms of i.e. affect and need satisfaction, but also in a more holistic context by means of a positive apprehension of it's impact on life satisfaction. Escapist engagement out of promotion intentions will correspond to a volitional organismic integration process known to be facilitative for optimal functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Accordingly, this type of activity engagement is defined as *self-expansion*.

In contrast, approaching action attention with a prevention focus will be accompanied by a deconstructive apprehension of one's attributes, which in turns restricts the person's possibilities with regards to obtaining self-developing experiences through activity engagement. The activity is viewed upon as an instrument to avoid the apprehension of negative aspects of self and to temporary direct one's attention away from disturbing memories or future obstacles. In line with principles of emotion dynamics (Gross & Levenson, 1993), an allocation of the cognitive resources in direction of a moderation of negative affect will also reduce the likelihood of enhancement of positive affect. Engaging out of prevention intentions will temporary block self-threatening objects from consciousness, but it will not facilitate the self-enhancing and satisfying experiences in activity engagement known to be conducive to well-being. Therefore, escapist engagement out of prevention motives is defined as *self-suppression*.

2.6 The Escapism Model in a Life Domain Context

As emphasized previously, I argue that leisure activities exist within a broader system of life activities situated in different life domains. Consistent with such a dynamic understanding of leisure activity engagement, we propose that self-expansion and self-suppression are differently affected by the person's life circumstances. The self-expansion approach will supposedly be largely independent of negative life events and emotional distress, mostly because individuals with a promotion orientation hold a stable apprehension of the purifying outcomes in relation to a temporary escape from self, but also because they possess self-regulation resources which protect them from exploiting the activity in a suppressive manner when energy should be allocated elsewhere. When individuals with a promotion focus are experiencing trouble in other life domains their engagement in their favorite activity will either be put to a hold, or be approached in order to relieve stress by doing something that promotes positive affect.

In contrast, self-suppression will supposedly be enforced by poor life circumstances. Since self-suppressive engagement is motivated by prevention of negative thoughts and emotions, this type of engagement will supposedly elevate during troubled times. Individuals with a dominantly self-suppressive approach will intensify their maladaptive escapism-engagement in order to temporarily remove disturbing elements from consciousness. When individuals with a prevention focus are experiencing trouble in life domains outside the activity, the favorite activity will be regarded as a "safe haven" and be approached more intensely to suppress negative thoughts. However, this might lead to a downward spiral because this type of activity engagement will not result in elevated energy or vitality, but only drain resources that should be allocated in direction of sorting out the sources for the problematic life situation.

2.7 Conceptual Similarities and Differences between the Passion Model and the Escapism Model

The Two-Dimensional Model of Escapism and The Dualistic Model of Passion share several similarities, but they are also conceptually very different. I will begin by describing the similarities of the two models. First, the Escapism Model and the Passion Model share their

empirical focus on people's favorite activities. These are activities that people regard as important in their lives and in which they spend a significant amount of time. According to Vallerand et al. (2003), these activities are included into the self, which imply that they become a distinct component of their identity. In studies on the Passion model and the Escapism model, the average time spent per week in the activity is typically around ten hours. In other words, these activities take up a lot of the individuals' time, energy, and resources, which also underline the importance of this research. Second, both the Passion model and the Escapism model describe motivational processes in relation to engagement in these types of activities. The Passion model suggests that the motivation for one's passion activity is decided by how the activity is internalized. If the activity is internalized in a controlled manner, the engagement in the activity will continue to be felt as controlled, either by others or by the contingencies attached to the activity. However, if the activity is internalized in an autonomous manner, it will continue to be carried out in a volitional manner. The Escapism model proposes that the basic motivation for the engagement is to experience *action attention*. This experience is reported to be psychologically rewarding in several studies, either it is described as being "immersed" in an activity, "cognitive narrowing", or as "flow". Additionally, the Escapism model suggests that the goal of experiencing action attention may be approached from two motivational directions, either by promotion or prevention intentions as embedded in the Regulatory focus theory by Higgins (1998). Third, at a superordinate level, both the Passion model and the Escapism model are dualistic, in the sense that they propose that there are two motivational paths towards the involvement in favorite activities. One path is described as in line with optimal functioning with regards to the enhancement of well-being, whereas the other path is described as less adaptive and a potential source for ill-being.

Despite their conceptual similarities, the Escapism model and the Passion model differ also in several manners. First, the internalization of the activity - which is central to the Passion model - is not emphasized in the Escapism model. The Escapism model is built upon on the interaction of regulatory focus as a personality characteristic and effect from variations in life circumstances on activity engagement. In other words, the two models are dissimilar with regard to origin of motives for activity engagement and how they are affected. Second, since the internalization process is regarded to have lasting effects on preferences and sets of behaviors, this indicates that the Passion model to a larger extent deals with more stable individual mechanisms as compared to the Escapism model. Harmonious and obsessive

passion will vary in their consequences, mainly because the surroundings change, but the strength and the source for the motivation towards the passion activity will remain the same. This is not the case in the Escapism model. Specifically, self-suppression will be intensified by ill-being, whereas self-expansion will diminish in times of personal turmoil. Chronic regulatory focus will affect what type of escapism engagement that will develop, but their magnitudes are at the same time largely dependent on life circumstances. In this sense, the Escapism model does potentially to a higher degree explain psychological variations in motivation for activity engagements. Third, the two model deals with well-being in two opposite ways. Whereas the Passion model includes well-being as an outcome variable, the Escapism model includes well-being primarily as a predictor variable. In the Passion model, obsessive passion is described to have a negative impact on well-being, and harmonious passion is described to lead to enhanced well-being. In contrast, the Escapism model proposes that variations in well-being have different impacts on self-suppression and self-expansion in activity engagement.

In sum, I believe that the Passion model and the Escapism may complement each other towards a better understanding of peoples' engagement in leisure activities.

3.0 STUDY OBJECTIVES

3.1 Paper 1 – Passion, intrapersonal conflict, and life domain outcomes

In this paper the dualistic model of passion was investigated in a leisure context. It was suggested that people's *favorite activities* often are identical with leisure activities. Based on a life-domain perspective on leisure activity engagement, it was hypothesized that having an obsessive passion for a leisure activity will lead to intrapersonal conflicts regarding the resources invested in the activity. Because the obsessive individual possesses limited control over his or her engagement in the activity, the resources allocated towards the activity will more likely be perceived as unacceptable by significant others. In contrast, since harmonious passion is based on an autonomous internalization of the activity, it was expected that this type of passion would be unrelated to intrapersonal conflicts regarding engagement in the activity. Furthermore, it was suggested that intrapersonal conflicts would mediate the effects

of harmonious and obsessive passion towards life domain outcomes. More specifically, intrapersonal conflicts would attenuate positive effects and enforce negative effects on life domains outside the activity domain.

3.2 Paper 2 – Obsessive passion in a leisure context

In this paper, a broad set of hypotheses was tested regarding obsessive passion for a leisure activity. First, we wanted to elaborate more on obsessive passion as a self-regulatory deficiency. It was suggested that obsessive passion bears similarities with addictive behaviors like PC-gaming and gambling in the sense that they are related to poor psychological adjustment. We expected that obsessive passion for a leisure activity would correlate significantly with measures initially developed to tap into maladaptive engagements in activities more traditionally seen as addictive. Furthermore, the outcomes of obsessive passion were hypothesized to be negative in several aspects. We expected that the overall outcomes from obsessive passion regarding need satisfaction, affect, and life domain outcomes would be negative. If these proposals regarding obsessive passion for a leisure activity would be met empirically, this could argue for a broader understanding of leisure as a scientific concept.

3.3 Paper 3 – Escapism in relation to leisure activity engagement – exploring a new conceptualization

In this paper, a two-dimensional model of escapism was developed and explored empirically. We expected that two sets of escapism motives could be distinguished in relation to engagement in leisure activities - defined as *self-suppression* and *self-expansion*. It was hypothesized that these two dimensions of escapism could be organized into two different factors which would relate differently to other measures of personality characteristics, activity approaches, and measures of affect and well-being. We also expected that self-suppression and self-expansion would show different dynamics with regards to well-being. We expected self-expansion to be unrelated to variations in general affect, whereas we expected self-suppression to be enhanced by general negative affect. Furthermore, since passion is supposed to be an internalized approach to one's favorite activity and escapism more affected by life

circumstances, we hypothesized that the two dimensions of escapism would add unique variance in a mediational model with positive and affective outcomes from activity engagement as dependent variables.

4.0 METHODOLOGICAL AND STATISTICAL ISSUES

4.1 Web-based Questionnaires in Survey Designs

All papers in the present thesis are based on data collected by using web-based questionnaires. This approach to data sampling has several advantages, but also some limitations. One of its advantages is that it is easy for the researcher to construct. There are several software programs that are specialized for designing questionnaires online. These programs make it possible to simply paste the items of a scale into a predefined questionnaire. The researcher can choose between several ways of distribution of the questionnaire, like for example sending it to particular participants through e-mail, or by inviting participants openly to the survey through a link on an Internet site. This illustrates another advantage of this data sampling method – it can be answered by the participants in a more flexible manner. Depending on internet connection, the questionnaire can be accessed easily in many contexts and be carried out when the participants feel most motivated to respond to the items, which again might enhance the validity of the data.

There are also potential pitfalls by using this data sampling approach. The representativeness of the sample might be threatened by including internet skills as one of the inclusion criteria. Presumably, Internet skills are better among educated people and among younger people. When doing research which is supposed to be generalized to a wide population, this approach would increase the probability for a skewed sample. Another potentially major problem with a web-based survey design is the lack of possibility to verify that each respond is made by a unique participant. If one is not using password-based invitations, the data may be easily manipulated. On the other hand, it is difficult to see why someone should have the motives for creating multiple responses in a data set. Still, password-based surveys should be preferred if one is able to choose between several kinds of invitation designs.

4.2 The Quality of Scales

The latent nature of psychological constructs makes them difficult to measure. It is easy to monitor physical behavior but much harder to measure why we act in a certain way. The most straightforward approach is to simply ask people why they behave in a certain manner, but to which extent are people able to monitor their own behavior in light of their values, needs, and goals? And to which extent are they able to define and retrieve their emotions? In experimental designs it is possible to focus explicitly on specific relations by the manipulation of selected variables. In survey designs, we rely exclusively on the self-monitoring and introspection of our participants. This puts a heavy toll on the reliability and validity of the scales used to measure constructs in psychological research.

4.2.1 Validity

There exist several techniques to investigate and enhance the validity and reliability of psychological measurements. Most of the scales in the present thesis have been developed through strings of studies with the primary goal of creating a reliable and valid scale (e.g. Vallerand et al., 2003). One of the main approaches to assure the quality of scales is to investigate their relations to scales measuring similar psychological concepts, which often is defined as the *convergent validity* of a scale. If these relations are theoretically meaningful they indicate that one measures what one intends to measure. Still, a measurement should also demonstrate *discriminate validity*, that is, be unrelated to operationalizations not relevant for the concept. Another approach is to investigate to which extent a measurement is able to predict outcomes expected to derive from the construct of attention. In this manner one goes from cross-sectional validation and to longitudinal validation, which makes it possible to investigate the stability of the measurement as well as proposed causal relationships incorporated in the concept. This is defined as *predictive validity*. Also relevant, a scale should demonstrate “face” validity in the sense that it can be judged as sound by experts on the concept of interest. There are several more types of validity, but in the end overall validity depends on the general quality of the measurement the inferences are based on, and to which extent the theoretical conclusions are meaningful and sound.

4.2.2 Reliability

Whereas the assessment of validity to a large extent is based on theoretical interpretations of the psychometrical properties of the scale, the judgment of reliability is more often based on statistical criteria. The internal reliability of a scale - or a facet or factor of a more extensive inventory - is most commonly reported as the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This alpha coefficient estimates the consistency of the items which is supposed to measure the same concept. The alpha coefficient ranges from 0 to 1.0, and values between .80 and .90 is regarded as optimal. Values below .80 indicate that the items are not measuring the same thing and values above .90 indicates that some items might be redundant or that they are measuring just a fragment of the concept. However, it is not unusual to see papers reporting alpha coefficients close to .60.

When it comes to the measurement of personality constructs that is argued to be of a stable character, then the test-retest reliability of a scale should be investigated. The test-retest reliability is to which extent the scale is measurement exclusively taps into the psychological concept of interest and not contextual or casual elements not intended to affect the scores. Therefore, the scores of the same person responding to the same scale at two different occasions in different context should be close to identical. Of course, this should not be the case for measurements of for example affect, motivation, vitality, and other more fluctuating parts of the human psyche.

4.2.3 Threats to the validity and reliability of the studies in the current thesis

A potential threat to the validity and reliability of the papers included in the present thesis is that most of the scales included were originally developed in samples of native English speakers. First, a translation of a scale represents a potential error of measurement. Physical objects might be easy to translate, like "car" and "house", but it might be more difficult to replace words about emotions and motives from a different language. Therefore, trained translators or bilingual professionals should verify the translation made of scales developed in other languages.

The scales included in the present thesis were verified through a back-translation procedure. This means that the scales were translated from its' original language and into Norwegian, and then translated from Norwegian to the original language by a professional or bilingual to detect any semantic deviance. Second, the aspect of "culture" is always a potential threat to the quality of measurement. There might be different perceptions of items among participants from the USA or Canada compared to Norwegian participants. However, it could be argued that all these countries have similar western values and ways of living, so that potential problems regarding the validity and applicability of the result should not be harmed. Also, the statistical analyses indicated that the scales performed very similar in samples from different countries

I could have elaborated more on different aspects of psychological measurements, but this is not the main objective of the present thesis. Overall, the methodological approach of the present thesis is of a conventional character. The designs, the methods, and the statistical analyses in the thesis are well known in the field of leisure research and in the tradition of social and personality psychology.

4.3 Structural Equation Modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) can be described as a complex approach to multiple regression analysis. SEM analyses are primarily confirmatory, that is, based on the researchers' presumptions regarding a theoretical model. The researcher is more likely to use SEM to determine whether a certain model is valid, rather than using SEM exploratory in order to find a suitable model based on every possible configuration of variables in a data matrix. Independent variables not predicted by other variables are defined as exogenous, whereas variables with predictor path assigned to them is defined as endogenous (dependent). SEM models often also include intermediate variables which both are predicted by other variables and functions as predictors of other variables, which also are defined as endogenous because they are partly dependent on exogenous variables.

One of the strengths of SEM is that it makes it possible to combine latent measurements on item level with regression coefficients among the latent concepts of a model. It actually makes it possible to combine confirmatory factor analysis with multiple regression analysis.

A complete SEM analysis consists of two stages (Byrne, 2001). First, the latent concepts are estimated by means of confirmatory factor analysis, which indicates to which extent the items of each construct taps into the same concept. Sometimes it is necessary to modify the latent measurements by either removing items with insufficient loadings, or to let them load on other constructs. Another possibility is to let the error variance among items covariate to improve the factor structure. The second step of SEM is to estimate the causal paths implied in the model. To test whether there are effects in the data set that are not theoretically predicted, one starts with a fully saturated model with paths drawn from all exogenous variables and towards all possible endogenous variables. Then one removes paths without significant effects, starting with the path with the smallest beta weight. At this point, the strength of SEM is that it estimates the overall fit between the theoretical model and the data according to model fit indices. The model is optimized through removing redundant paths.

The overall fit of the model is judged according to cut-off values of the model fit indices (for details, see Hu & Bentler, 1999) which is provided by the structural equation modelling software like AMOS, LISREL and MPlus. No complete SEM analyses were conducted in the present thesis, only confirmatory factor analyses and path analyses reported in separate studies. Path analysis is performed without using latent measurement models. The analysis is based on relationships estimated on the sums of scales.

4.4 Moderation and Mediation

SEM analysis is very useful when testing moderation and mediation effects (see Baron & Kenny, 1986). The phenomenon of *moderation* occurs when the relationship between two variables depends on a third variable. For example, in a simple regression analysis one finds that “education” predicts “income”. However, the correlation matrix shows that “age” is correlated with both the independent variable (education) and the dependent variable (income). Since the variable “age” affects the strength of the direct relationship between education and income, this third variable is referred to as the *moderator* (also referred to as an *interaction effect*). In SEM, the moderation effect can be investigated in a very explicit and flexible manner, and maybe particularly in AMOS which is a very visual approach to SEM. AMOS is based on the construction of visual models like the one depicted in Figure 1. Another advantage of SEM is that it makes it possible to control for covariance between the

predictor and the moderator variable. It is also possible to control for error variance in cases with several endogenous variables. In AMOS and other SEM-programs it is possible to test the significance of the difference between the goodness-of-fit chi-square values for one model with the moderator variable and one without the moderator variable. If Model 1 fits the data better than Model 2, then there is a significant interaction effect. Finally, the overall representativeness of the model compared to the data is given by the model fit indices.

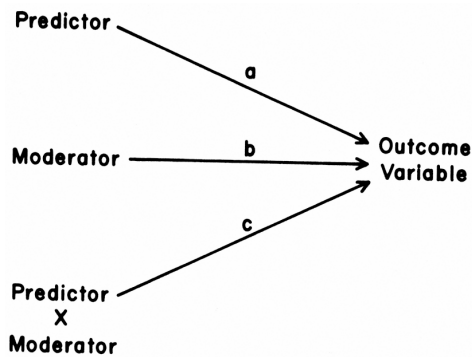


Figure 1. Moderator model (from Baron & Kenny, 1986).

As well as with moderation, the phenomenon of *mediation* depends on the inclusion of a third variable. However, the mediation model can be regarded as more causally complex than a moderation model. Instead of hypothesizing a direct causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, like “education” and “income”, a mediational model suggests that the independent variable causes a mediator variable like “leadership” (see figure 2), which in turn causes the dependent variable. The mediator variable helps to reveal the nature of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable. A complete mediation exists when the initial direct effect from the independent variable and onto the dependent variable disappears after the inclusion of the mediator. A partial mediation exists when the direct effect from the independent variable and onto the dependent variable is suppressed by the inclusion of the third variable, but that it remains significant. In SEM-analysis, the mediation effect can be investigated depending on several conditions, like for example let the error variances of the mediator and the dependent variable

covariate (if there is a theoretical deduced reason for it). Again, the overall fit of the model is reported by the model fit indices.

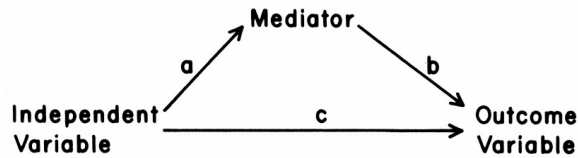


Figure 2. Mediator model (from Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Although causality is implied in most SEM-models, one must not forget that data from cross-sectional designs are of a correlational nature. The causality of SEM-models are often theory driven and not based on longitudinal investigations of predictors and outcomes. When cross-sectional data is used, it is very important to remind oneself and potential readers that the paths in structural equation models are hypothetical relations and not derived from changes and effects measured in time spans. It is quite common to test models which imply other causal structures in order to test their model fit in comparison with the theoretically proposed model, but this does not rule out the option that other structures exist in a real-life setting.

5.0 DESIGNS AND RESULTS

5.1 Paper 1: Stenseng, F. (2008). The Two Faces of Leisure Activity Engagement: Harmonious and Obsessive Passion in Relation to Intrapersonal Conflict and Life Domain Outcomes.

This paper investigated intrapersonal conflicts (Higgins, 1987) and life domain outcomes in relation to passion activity engagement. In this study obsessive passion was associated with intrapersonal conflict in relation to activity involvement, whereas harmonious passion was associated with concordance of self-guides regarding activity engagement. Furthermore, intrapersonal conflict mediated the individuals' experiences of positive life domain outcomes from the activity engagement. The study included outcomes on the life domains of family,

work/studies, and partner/spouse. Moreover, separate path analyses conducted for each life domain revealed different causal dynamics. For example, intrapersonal conflict had no mediating effect on the outcomes of obsessive passion on the work/studies-domain, whereas it predicted negative outcomes in the partner/spouse-domain. As expected, intrapersonal conflict was not predicted by harmonious passion, which indicates that detrimental social effects are avoided by individuals with a harmonious approach toward their passion activity. Based on the discussion on passion and persistence as earlier referred to in Vallerand et al. (2003), one interpretation of these findings is that harmonious passion is embedded in an autonomous internalization which makes it easier to terminate the engagement in the activity when it has negative consequences, and maybe especially when it has negative impact on life domains regarded as particularly valuable. Most importantly, these findings indicate that the outcomes from passion activity engagement are dependent on the individual's assessment of its interpersonal relations, and that having a passion activity contributes to manifest and unique effects within a broad life context.

5.2 Paper 2: Stenseng, F., Rise, J., & Kraft, P. (2009). The Dark Side of Leisure: Obsessive Passion and Its Covariates and Outcomes.

This paper includes two studies exploring obsessive passion for a leisure activity in relation to measures of maladaptive activity engagement and outcomes relevant for subjective well-being. Study 1 showed that obsessive passion was strongly correlated with an adapted scale developed to measure Internet addiction (Young, 1998). Also, obsessive passion was moderately associated with intentions to escape self-awareness through engagement in the activity. Escapism by means of trying to avoid negative thoughts and emotions by focusing on an activity has been linked to poor psychological adjustment and decreased well-being (Stenseng, Rise, Kraft, 2009b). Study 1 also replicated the pattern of intrapersonal conflicts regarding inclusion of the activity into the self found in paper 1. In study 2 we investigated the outcomes of obsessive passion in a well-being context. First, obsessive passion was inconsistently related to basic need satisfaction in activity engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Obsessive passion negatively predicted autonomy satisfaction in the activity, and was unrelated to relatedness satisfaction. The satisfaction of competence in the activity engagement was, however, positively predicted by obsessive passion. This indicates that obsessive passion partly rests on ego-related concepts, like self-esteem. Second, study 2

showed that obsessive passion predicted negative affective outcomes from activity engagement, whereas it had no effect on positive affect. Finally, obsessive passion predicted negative outcomes in all life domains included in the study, e.g. partner, studies/work, other leisure activities. In sum, this paper establishes a link between obsessive passion and addiction-like engagement and illustrates that this type of approach towards a leisure activity can be discussed with regard to self-regulatory deficiencies. Accordingly, this paper confirms that obsessive passion for a leisure activity has a negative impact on a broad set of indicators of subjective well-being.

5.3 Paper 3: Stenseng, F., Rise, J., & Kraft, P. (2009). Two Dimensions of Escapism: Self-suppression and Self-expansion.

This paper developed and investigated a two-dimensional model of escapism in relation to leisure activity engagement. The experience of escapism in activities is defined as task absorption, temporary dissociation, and narrowed self-evaluation. Inspired by regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1994) it was proposed that intentions to experience escapism in leisure activities are derived from two different sets of regulatory directions; either promotion-motives or prevention-motives. Escapism motivated from a promotion focus is directed towards the promotion of positive affect and positive experiences. Because this approach towards an activity is argued to be facilitative for the organismic integration process (Deci & Ryan, 2000), this dimension of escapism is defined as *self-expansion*. Escapism motivated from a prevention focus is directed towards the suppression of painful self-knowledge and negative emotions by engaging in the activity. This type of engagement is related to a compartmentalization of self, and this dimension of escapism is defined as *self-suppression*. Three studies were conducted to test the two-dimensional model of escapism. The main objective of study 1 was to develop a psychometrically sound scale in order to measure the two dimensions of escapism in relation to activity engagement. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses supported an eleven item scale with five items measuring self-expansion and six items measuring self-suppression. Both dimensions were related to criterion items measuring escapism as a state in activity engagement, thereby demonstrating their commonness with regard to the escapism state. In line with our expectations, self-suppression was negatively related to well-being, whereas self-expansion was unrelated to this measure. Furthermore, self-suppression was positively associated with depression vulnerability, trait

emotion suppression, and negatively with self-control. Self-expansion was unrelated to these measures. Self-suppression was, however, positively related to positive affective outcomes from activity engagement, although much weaker compared to self-expansion. Study 2 investigated the dynamics of the two-dimensions of escapism in relation to well-being. In a cross-sectional design it was expected that general positive affect and general negative affect would inflict differently on self-suppression and self-expansion. The affect measures were defined to measure affective experiences the two preceding weeks before the survey. As expected, general negative affect strongly predicted self-suppression, but had no significant effect on self-expansion. This supports the idea that leisure activities are approached in a more self-suppressive manner during difficult life circumstances, whereas this effect is missing for self-expansion. These results comply with the affective dynamics outlined in the theoretical presentation of two-dimensional model of escapism. In study 3, the escapism model was investigated in relation to the dualistic model of passion. Since both models are investigated in relation to specific activities, it was hypothesized that they would have overlapping qualities, and maybe also be complimentary to each other. Path analyses were conducted in order to test the mediational effect of self-suppression and self-expansion on passion and affective outcomes in activity engagement. The analysis showed that the two dimensions of escapism added explanatory power to the model, supporting a dual-mode model with the following paths: *Harmonious passion* -> *Self-expansion* -> *Positive affect*, and *Obsessive passion* -> *Self-suppression* -> *Negative affect*. In other words, the two-dimensional model of escapism contributes uniquely to the affective outcomes in leisure activity engagement, which shows that the model has significance beyond the passion model. Taken together, paper 3 establishes a new conceptualization of escapism in relation to activity engagements. It suggests that individuals approach their favorite activities with different escapism motives according to their regulatory focuses and their life circumstances.

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 A Dynamical Approach towards Leisure Activity Engagement

The present thesis presents a novel approach towards the understanding of motivation and outcomes in leisure activity engagement. Most importantly, it illuminates the psychological forces behind engagement in leisure activities, but also why individuals performing identical activities may experience very different psychological outcomes. The thesis contains theoretical elaborations and empirical findings that illustrate some of the psychological factors at work in leisure activity engagements, indicating that these may vary among individuals depending on their internalization of the activity, their regulatory focus, and their life circumstances. In sum, these findings are relevant in defining what leisure is, and not only what it is not.

In the introduction, I argued that traditional leisure research may benefit into the idiosyncratic aspects of activity engagements, and that the inclusion of psychological theory would be favorable in order to probe into why leisure activities plays such an important role in people's lives. As the thesis illustrates, leisure activities are approached in a highly motivated manner and are valued to the extent that they are being referred to as "favorite activities". Furthermore, I suggested that leisure activities are much more than just time off from obligations, and that they ideally should complement other activities in life in direction of basic need satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). I criticized mainstream leisure research to be too focused on the explicit attributes of activities, instead of seeking out *why* engagement in these activities are experienced as fun, joyful, meaningful, and so on. In order to describe the unique relationship that exists between the person and his or hers favorite activity I introduced the concept of *activity affordances*. This concept needs more elaboration, but at the current point the concept illustrates that engagement in a single activity might be approached in many different ways and lead to very different psychological outcomes. It helps us focus on the idiosyncratic aspects of activity engagement, and since the focus in the present thesis is psychological mechanisms in leisure activity engagements in general, the concept was included in order to emphasize that our findings can be generalized over a vast range of different activities either in sports, arts, music, etc.

Overall, the findings from the three studies in the present thesis clearly show that: 1) leisure activities are engaged in for different personal reasons, 2) engagement in identical leisure activities can be experienced very differently between persons, and 3) engagement in leisure activities can generate very different psychological outcomes. The findings also suggest that the motives, the experiences, and the outcomes from activity engagements are affected by the broader scope of life circumstances. These dynamics were demonstrated in all three studies in the present thesis.

6.2 Empirical Evidence for a Dynamical Approach towards Leisure Activity Engagement

In this section I will discuss in detail findings in support of a dynamical approach towards engagement in leisure activities. In paper 1, I showed that life domain outcomes depended on the two types of passion. Harmonious passion was associated with the experience that engagement in the favorite activity had positive effects on life domains outside the activity. In contrast, obsessive passion was experienced to affect life domains outside the activity negatively. Moreover, these outcomes depended also on the intrapersonal conflicts regarding the inclusion of the activity. These conflicts were based on the strength of inclusion of the activity into the self depending on an egocentric standpoint as opposed to the perception of an accepted strength according to significant others outside the activity. These findings comply with the limited resources-approach to leisure activity engagement presented in the introduction of the present thesis. By interpreting leisure as one of several life domains one highlights the constant balancing of the time, money, and other resources that takes place in people's lives. Seemingly, obsessive passion tends to cause imbalance in the system of life domains, whereas harmonious passion more likely leads to a balanced engagement conducive to optimal psychological functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Several findings in paper 1 were replicated in the two studies reported in paper 2. Obsessive passion was associated with intrapersonal conflicts and negative life domain outcomes. Furthermore, paper 2 also discussed obsessive passion in a self-regulation context. Study 1 showed that obsessive passion was associated with maladaptive emotion regulation and had substantial overlap with a scale developed to measure activity addiction. Furthermore, obsessive passion marginally predicted need satisfaction in relation to activity engagement. These findings expand the findings from paper 1 with regard to the psychological

mechanisms underpinning obsessive passion. It seems like obsessive passion is linked to self-regulation deficiencies when it comes to controlling the engagement in the activity. According to the Dualistic Model of Passion, obsessive passion stems from a controlled internalization of the activity. An empirical study by Vallerand et al. (2007) also suggests that this internalization is partly determined by the extent to which the person possesses an autonomous or a controlled personality orientation. More specifically, they found that a controlled personality orientation predicted obsessive passion, whereas an autonomous orientation predicted harmonious passion. The findings in paper 2 clearly support the idea that obsessive passion is associated with a loss of control over the engagement in the activity. However, our findings were made on a more specific level in the sense that the measurements in the paper were related to engagement in the actual activity. At this point, there have not been published studies designed to investigate the actual internalization of the activity and its consequences for the development of passion for activities. Until longitudinal studies on this issue have been conducted, we can only suggest that harmonious and obsessive passion are developed from the interaction of the internalization of the activity and personality characteristics, but we cannot draw any conclusions regarding the predictive strength of personal vs. environmental factors for lasting passionate activity engagement.

In paper 3, we presented a new model based on engagement in favorite activities. The Two-Dimensional Model of Escapism was investigated in three studies. In study 1, a scale to measure the two theoretically derived dimensions self-expansion and self-suppression was developed and validated. In study 2, the different dynamics of the two escapism dimensions with regard to well/ill-being were investigated. In study 3, the Escapism model was investigated in relation to the Passion model and affective outcomes from activity engagement. Overall, the theoretical model regarding escapism intentions deriving from promotion vs. prevention focuses was supported. Of utmost relevance for the dynamical approach to leisure activity engagement taken in the present thesis, the first investigations of the Escapism model suggest that not only personality and internalization determine motivation for engagement in favorite activities, but also levels of general well-being. The respondents reported that engagement in their favorite activity was partly motivated from intentions to escape negative aspects of self. The theoretical idea that self-suppression increases during periods of ill-being was supported in study 2 of the paper. In contrast to the Passion model which regards well-being as an outcome from activity engagement, the first research on the Escapism model show that well-being also can be regarded as a predictor for

activity engagement. This supports the idea that engagement in leisure activities is affected by a broad set of determinants - not only by the contingencies of the activity itself.

6.3 The Dualism of Activity Engagements

Traditionally, engagement in leisure activities has been regarded exclusively as favorable for well-being. In opposition to this view, the three papers included in the present thesis suggest that leisure also has a dark side previously unexplored in the leisure literature. By applying the Dualistic Model of Passion and the Two-Dimensional Model of Escapism on engagement in leisure activities, it becomes evident that leisure activity engagement can take forms related to maladaptive psychological functioning. Both models propose that there is a healthy and an unhealthy approach to engagement in favorite activities, and that they evolve dependent on conjunctive effects of personality characteristics and external factors.

The Dualistic Model of Passion suggests that the development of either harmonious or obsessive passion is dependent on the onset of the activity. Harmonious passion evolves from an autonomous internalization of the activity, whereas obsessive passion evolves from a controlled internalization of the activity. In the first paper published on The Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al. 2003), the authors chose to present the theory in the context of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In other words, the harmonious part of the model conducive to well-being was highlighted. They went so far as to conclude that having a harmonious passion for an activity was one of those aspects that make life worth living. On the other hand, Vallerand and his colleagues (2003) discussed obsessive passion in the context of psychological dependency. The controlled internalization that takes place in the development of obsessive passion results in an engagement where the person inhibits limited control over the behavior. Since the individual possesses restricted control over the engagement, the activity might become a source for negative affect and inflict negatively on well-being, but the person will still not be able to terminate the engagement. This dualism in the Passion model has been supported in several studies. Harmonious passion has been linked to e.g. flow, positive affect, and well-being, whereas obsessive passion has been linked to performance inhibitions, negative affect, and ill-being.

In the present thesis, the dualistic approach towards motivation for engagement in favorite activities was supported. Paper 1 showed that harmonious passion predicted positive life domain outcomes and a balanced inclusion of the activity into the self, whereas obsessive passion predicted negative life domain outcomes based on intrapersonal conflicts regarding activity inclusion. Paper 2 was concerned with obsessive passion, but the results in the paper complied with those in paper 1. Furthermore, paper 2 elaborated more on obsessive passion in an addiction context, finding that individuals with a dominantly obsessive approach engaged in their favorite activity in a similar manner as internet addicts (Young, 1998). In relation to the discussion on harmonious passion in a positive psychology context, these findings suggest that obsessive passion actually may make life *less* worth living. In this sense, the dualism of passion was empirically supported in the present thesis.

The investigation of the Escapism model also complies with a dualistic approach to engagement in leisure activities. The Escapism model is built upon the promotion vs. prevention distinction in Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1998). In relation to task engagement, one of these regulatory focuses will dominate the person's motivation. Approaching the task with a promotion focus relates to an emphasis on the positive outcomes from an accomplishment of the task, whereas a prevention focus relates to an emphasis on the negative outcomes in case of failing the task. In paper 3, these two motivational mindsets were explored in relation to an escape from self by means of engaging in a leisure activity. The results provided support for the existence of the two regulatory focuses in escapism engagement. More specifically, self-expansion and self-suppression had different relations to predictors and outcomes, as well as being consistently observed as two distinct dimensions.

The Passion model and the Escapism model both illustrate the dualism of leisure activity engagement. They represent an acknowledgement of the self-regulatory aspects of being heavily involved in a favorite activity. Sometimes individuals approach their activities in a self-destructive manner or at least in a way that challenges the notion that engagement in leisure activities are exclusively conducive to subjective well-being. Still, I feel that it is necessary to point out that this distinction is not totally clear cut. As found by Vallerand et al. (2007), obsessive passion may partly contribute to deliberate practice and thereby enhanced performance. Also, it might be that individuals with a dominantly obsessive approach towards their favorite activity experience positive emotions in relation to the activity, but that these emotions are derived from other and less stable sources than for dominantly harmonious

individuals. It might be that these emotions are experienced more seldom because they need more specific conditions than harmonious passion to be triggered. The persistence of obsessive individuals may not be accounted for fully by the internalization of the activity, but also by potential contingencies incorporated in the activity. However, at this point the persistence of obsessive individuals remains a puzzle.

In the same way as obsessive passion may have some positive aspects, self-suppression might also have some momentary positive outcomes. In paper 3, the affective outcomes from self-suppression in activity engagement were not consistent. In study 1, self-suppression was related to positive affective outcomes and unrelated to negative affect. On the other hand, self-suppression was unrelated to positive affective outcomes and positively associated with negative affect in study 3. This suggests that self-suppression might be a determinant of negative affective outcomes in activity engagement, but not categorically. Another unexplored aspect of escapism is to what extent self-suppression functions with regards to Baumeister's (1998) concept of *ego depletion*. We suggested that self-expansion in a leisure activity will be instrumental in order to unwind from the constant monitoring of the self, by means of action attention, which again might be conducive in order to regain resources in direction of exerting self-control. However, since self-suppression also includes a temporary reduction of self-monitoring, it might be that also this type of escapism contributes in direction of regaining self-control. At the present point we can not rule out the possibility that self-suppression functions with regards to a reversing of ego depletion.

In sum, these findings illustrate that the dualism of passion and escapism is not fully "black or white". Although both obsessive passion and self-suppression are associated with subjective ill-being, these approaches towards a favorite activity might also entail positive experiences, but notably, to a significant less degree than for harmonious passion engagement and self-expansion escapism.

6.4 Conclusive remarks

The present thesis incorporates psychological theory into a leisure context. The three studies in the present thesis make use of psychological models on favorite activities to illuminate motivation and outcomes in leisure activity engagements. The results clearly demonstrate that

these models have relevance for the leisure field. One of the assets of using psychological theory in leisure research is an increased focus on the individuals' experiences in relation to activity engagements, and a lessened focus on the activities' explicit attributes. The introduction of the concept of *activity affordances* represent a path towards the possibility to generalize over a vast range of activities. It also includes an acknowledgement that engagement in leisure activities is based on a person-activity fit, which might explain why people find pleasure in so many different activities in their time "off from obligations". Overall, this approach may make it easier to define what leisure *is*, and not only what it is not.

The present approach also demonstrates that engagement in leisure activities exists within a broader system of life domains. In line with a dualistic approach towards leisure motivation, engagement that origin from adaptive motivational sources, such as harmonious passion and self-expansion, assures that the engagement is felt as a contribution to other domains and is conducive to general well-being. In contrast, engagement that origin from maladaptive motivational sources, such as obsessive passion and self-suppression, inflicts outcomes from leisure activity engagement that are felt as detrimental to general well-being. These findings indicate that theories on leisure research and empirical studies in the field should acknowledge that these activities are affected by (and affect) elements situated in other life domains.

The present thesis also represents a contribution to theories on motivation and self-regulation. The self-regulatory mechanisms that take place within the individual in relation to his or her favorite activity may have relevance for other engagements, like for example education and work. Much research on motivation have been experimental, and have drawn conclusions from manipulations made in constrained contexts, whereas our approach examines regular engagement in activities that plays a special role in peoples' lives for several years, and even decades. In this sense, our findings are more in accordance with how motivation naturally evolves, and should therefore be of interest for researchers in the field of motivation in general.

All in all, I believe that this thesis represents a promising path for future research on leisure activity engagement, as well as a contextual approach to activity engagement which complements laboratory research on human motivation and self-regulation.

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