

## **LEISURE, ACCULTURATIVE STRESS, AND IMMIGRANTS' SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING**

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North America's socio-demographic composition is changing. In the United States 4% of the population was Asian or Pacific Islander in 2000, with this percentage expected to double by 2025 (Cheeseman Day, 2007). According to Census figures Chinese was the largest Asian group (Barnes & Bennett, 2002) and greater China (i.e., Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China) was the second largest region of birth of U.S. immigrants (Malone, et al., 2003). In Canada, the visible minority population exceeded 13% in 2000 (Statistics Canada, 2003). Although this figure is greater than the 5% reported in 1981, it is lower than that projected for 2017, when it is expected that 20% of Canada's population will be visible minority group members (Statistics Canada, 2005). Chinese is the largest and fastest growing visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2005), with 72% being immigrants, largely (45%) from Mainland China (Lindsay, 2007). In spite of these changes, a review of 3,369 articles in five major leisure journals found only 12 articles that dealt specifically with immigrants' leisure (Floyd, Bocarro, & Thompson, 2008). This finding led the authors to call for more research on leisure and immigration in general and on "the role of leisure in adjustment to [North] American society" (p. 4) in particular. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine how Chinese/Canadian immigrants' subjective well-being is affected by three factors: leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and acculturative stress.

### **Literature Review**

What constitutes the "good" life? To answer this question, researchers often examine peoples' subjective well-being (SWB; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). SWB has been measured emotionally, in terms of people's feelings of happiness, and cognitively, in terms of satisfaction with life in general and certain aspects of life (e.g., personal health, safety, relationships; International Wellbeing Group, 2006). This study examines both affective (e.g., happiness) and cognitive (e.g., overall life satisfaction) assessments of the "good" life. There has been a growing interest in understanding what constitutes the "good" life in other cultures, including Chinese. Research has investigated Chinese conceptualizations of life satisfaction (Liu, 2006) and happiness (e.g., Lu, 2001). Importantly, however, a recent study (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2007) found that whereas Euro-Americans ideally want to experience high arousal positive emotions (e.g., excitement) Asian people ideally want to experience low arousal positive emotions (e.g., calm). It seems worthwhile therefore, in a study of immigrants from Mainland China, to examine not only their happiness but also their "peacefulness". Cross-cultural support for the effects of leisure participation and leisure satisfaction on happiness exists. Lu and Hu's (2005) study with Chinese people found that sports and outdoor activities were positive predictors of happiness and, though overall leisure participation did not predict happiness, overall leisure satisfaction did. Similarly, Spiers and Walker (2009) found, using hierarchical multiple regressions, that while neither sex nor ethnicity (British/Canadians, Chinese/Canadians) impacted happiness, peacefulness, or overall life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction did positively affect all three of these SWB variables. If leisure has a positive effect on Chinese/Canadian immigrants' SWB then acculturative stress has a negative effect. According to Berry (1997), acculturative stress can occur after a person immigrates and involves behaviors and experiences that are disruptive to the

individual (e.g., perceived discrimination; Aroian, Norris, Tran, & Schappler-Morris, 1998). In one of the few leisure studies on this topic, Kim, Scott, and Oh (2005) found that while leisure satisfaction did not affect Korean immigrants' acculturative stress, leisure satisfaction positively, and acculturative stress negatively, influenced their self-esteem. Kim's et al. (2005) findings, in conjunction with those of the other studies described above, suggest that leisure participation and satisfaction will positively, and acculturative stress will negatively, impact Chinese/Canadian immigrants' happiness, peacefulness, and overall life satisfaction. As well, because participating (or not participating) in specific leisure activities and experiencing (or not experiencing) specific acculturative stressors is possible, associations among these sets of variables are also explored.

### Method and Results

A questionnaire was developed that included sections on ethnicity, leisure participation (12 activity categories), leisure satisfaction (using Beard & Ragheb's, 1980, six scales), affective (i.e., happiness and peacefulness, using Lyubomirsky & Lepper's, 1999, scales) and cognitive (i.e., overall life satisfaction, using the International Wellbeing Group's, 2006, scale) SWB, acculturative stress (using Aroian's et al., 1998, five scales), and other background information (e.g., age, sex, year immigrated from Mainland China to Canada). The questionnaire was back-translated and pre-tested, and then data were collected using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing and by trilingual interviewers (i.e., English, Cantonese, and Mandarin). A total of 220 Chinese/Canadian immigrants (males = 110, females = 110) residing in Calgary, Canada agreed to participate in the study. Happiness, peacefulness, and overall life satisfaction were each regressed (see table below), using a series of hierarchical multiple regressions, with the most distal predictors entered first and the most proximal predictor entered last (Cohen et al., 2003).

Regressor and predictor(s)	$\beta^1$	$\beta^2$	$\beta^3$	$\beta^4$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
<b>Happiness</b>						
Age	-0.08	-0.19	0.02	0.09		
Sex	0.20	0.17	0.15	0.13	.00	
Year immigrated		0.09	0.02	0.00	.01	.01
Acculturative stress			-0.25***	-0.22***		
Leisure participation			1.16**	0.52	.16	.15****
Leisure satisfaction				0.72**	.18	.02**
<b>Peacefulness</b>						
Age	0.00	-0.01	0.14	0.15		
Sex	-0.76	-0.77***	-0.78***	-0.75**	.05	
Year immigrated		0.05	0.02	0.00	.05	.00
Acculturative stress			-0.17*	-0.19**		
Leisure participation			1.00**	0.71	.13	.08****
Leisure satisfaction				0.35	.14	.01
<b>Overall life satisfaction</b>						
Age	0.17	-0.06	0.28	0.32		
Sex	0.20	0.23	0.30	0.31	.00	
Year immigrated		0.19****	0.08	0.08	.07	.07****
Acculturative stress			-0.32****	-0.32****		
Leisure participation			1.42****	1.10**	.31	.24****

Leisure satisfaction	0.38	.31	.00
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Note. Sex dummy coded male = 1, female = 2. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .0001$ .

As reported above: (a) the significant change in  $R^2$  suggests the fourth regression predicts *happiness* better, with lower levels of acculturative stress and higher levels of leisure satisfaction being significant predictors. This regression's overall  $R^2$  of 0.18 is indicative of a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992). (b) The non-significant change in  $R^2$  between the third and fourth regressions means the former predicts *peacefulness* better, with being male, lower levels of acculturative stress, and higher levels of leisure participation being significant predictors. This regression's overall  $R^2$  of 0.13 is indicative of a medium effect size. And (c) the non-significant change in  $R^2$  between the third and fourth regressions means the former predicts *overall life satisfaction* better, with lower levels of acculturative stress and higher levels of leisure participation being significant predictors. This regression's overall  $R^2$  of 0.31 is indicative of a large effect size. A canonical correlation between the 12 leisure participation activity categories and the five types of acculturative stress resulted in one significant ( $p = .0028$ ; correlation<sup>2</sup> = 0.25) root. Three activity categories had standardized coefficients at or above  $\pm 0.30$ , socializing (-0.62), volunteering (-0.35), and gambling (0.30), while two acculturative stressors had coefficients at or above  $\pm 0.30$ , "language" difficulties (+0.58) and feeling "not at home" (+0.66; Aroian et al. 1999).

## Discussion

This study explored how leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and acculturative stress influenced Chinese/Canadian immigrants' happiness, peacefulness, and overall life satisfaction. Results indicate that neither age nor year immigrated impacted any of the SWB variables, though sex did influence peacefulness. The last finding is consistent with work that found Asian women experienced higher levels of depression, likely due to learned helplessness (Dion & Girdano, 1990). Although sex predicted peacefulness, leisure participation and acculturative stress were better predictors. Leisure participation and acculturative stress also predicted overall life satisfaction and once these variables were included year immigrated became non-significant. These findings suggest that leisure participation and acculturative stress are important determinants of peacefulness and overall life satisfaction. Interestingly, leisure satisfaction rather than leisure participation predicted happiness (as did acculturative stress). This outcome was also found in a study of Taiwanese students' happiness (Lu & Hu, 2005), which suggests that leisure satisfaction may predict this specific type of affective SWB better whereas leisure participation predicts other affective (e.g., peacefulness) and cognitive (e.g., overall life satisfaction) aspects of SWB better, at least for Chinese and Chinese/Canadian people. Associations among three leisure activity categories and two acculturative stressors were also found and based on their coefficient signs four relationships may exist: (a) as socializing and volunteering decrease and gambling increases, language concerns and feelings of not belonging increase; (b) as socializing and volunteering increase and gambling decreases, language concerns and feelings of not belonging decrease; (c) as language concerns and feelings of not belonging decrease, socializing and volunteering increase and gambling decreases; and (d) as language concerns and feelings of not belonging increase, socializing and volunteering decrease and gambling increases. Support for parts of both the second (Zhang & Brunton, 2007) and fourth (Ellenbogen et al., 2007) relationship exist, although longitudinal research is necessary before causality can be confirmed. Regardless, this study's findings clearly establish that researchers and practitioners must

understand immigrants' leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and acculturative stressors if they want to positively affect immigrants' subjective well-being.