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# The influence of neighborhood characteristics on parents' perceptions toward adolescents' structured and unstructured leisure time



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# Introduction

- Adolescents' structured leisure time
  - Developmental benefits
  - Differences in participation rates
- Parents' perceptions
  - Only the result of characteristics of the familie (e.g. social class differences)?
  - Or influenced by neighborhood characteristics?!

# Introduction

- Impact of neighborhood on parents' perceptions: largely overlooked by studies in the leisure time research area
- In contrast, scholars in the field of social geography and environmental psychology have already documented how neighborhood characteristics influence the parents' perceptions toward children's (unstructured) leisure time:
  - Place of residence (urban/rural) (cf. Johansson, 2003; Valentine, 1997; Witlox & Tindemans, 2006)
  - Feelings of insecurity (cf. Prezza, Alparone, Cristallo & Luigi, 2005)
  - Residential instability (cf. Prezza, Alparone, Cristallo & Luigi, 2005)
  - Social networks in the neighborhood (cf. Hüttenmoser, 1995; Johansson, 2003; 2006; Karsten, 2003)

# Still many questions...

- Focus on children, but what about adolescents?
- Focus on the unstructured leisure time (walking, biking and autonomy of movement), but what about a broad range of structured and unstructured leisure time activities (e.g. cultural activities, sport activities, youth associations, theatre, etc.)?

**→ Study aim: gaining insight into parents' perceptions of their children's leisure time by examining how several neighborhood characteristics affect these perceptions**

# Methods

- Data from JOP-schoolmonitor (2013)
- JOP= Youth Research Platform
  - Interuniversity and interdisciplinary partnership
  - Policy Research Centre (Flemish Government)
  - Gathering empirical data on young people and their family in Flanders and conduct research
- Parents' survey
  - Self-reported survey
  - N = 2,029 parents of secondary school students

# Methods

- Sample
  - Socio-demographic background

Parents' gender	
Male	462 (24.90%)
Female	1395 (75.10%)
Child's age	
Mean	16.65
SD	1.78
Range	9
Child's gender	
Male	966 (47.60%)
Female	1064 (52.40%)
Parents' migration background	
No migration background	1399 (76.50%)
Migration background	430 (23.50%)
Family structure	
Single parents	323 (16.20%)
Two parent family	1673 (83.80%)

# Methods

- Sample

- Social class background

- Diploma parent

Primary education or none	202 (10.00%)
Secondary education	725 (36.00%)
College/university	1085 (54.00%)

- Parental occupation status

Employed	1668 (85.10%)
Employment temporarily interrupted	75 (3.80%)
Unemployed	217 (11.10%)

- Monthly income level

Mean	6.05 (€2500-€3749.99)
SD	4.74

# Methods

- **Method: questionnaire**
  - Socio-demographic and social class data:
    - Age, gender, migration background, family composition, education, occupational status and financial situation
  - Neighborhood characteristics:
    - Place of residence, feelings of insecurity, neighborhood diversity, residential instability and presence of social networks
  - Parents' perceptions of their children's leisure time:
    - parents' views on the importance of organized leisure time activities, the extent to which they support and encourage their children in their leisure activities, the extent to which they grant their children autonomy in their choices regarding their leisure time activities, etc., measured on a Likert scale (1-5)



# Results: parents' perceptions

	Encouragement	Support	Autonomy	Importance of cultural activities	Importance of sports	Parents' efforts
<b>Independent variables</b>						
Constant	64.00***	63.85***	47.36***	57.71***	74.69***	74.71***
Parents' gender (ref.cat.=male)	-0.07	-0.11	-4.02**	0.27	-0.38	-1.57
Child's age	-0.71**	-0.31	1.10***	-0.23	-1.40	-0.70*
Child's gender (ref.cat.=male)	1.31	0.55	1.75	1.29	0.51	-0.25
Parents' migration background (ref.cat.=parents with no migration background)	-0.85	0.12	-0.83	2.40	1.54	-0.27
Family structure (ref. cat.= single-parent household)	0.35	2.01	-3.16	-1.62	3.64	1.50
Parent education (ref. cat. = none of the parents obtained higher education)	14.33***	12.95***	-6.39**	13.35***	8.78***	12.04***
Parents' occupational status (ref.cat. = not both parents have a job)	2.13	-1.11	-0.82	1.64	3.28*	1.66
Income level	0.16	0.20	0.06	0.02	-0.03	-0.14
Urban area (ref.cat.=rural area)	-1.43	0.49	-2.27	-0.29	-1.43	-3.28*
Feelings of insecurity in the neighborhood	-0.01	-0.11	-0.22	-0.13	0.18	0.59***
<b>Neighborhood diversity</b>						
Neighborhood with a high level of Belgian people	-2.96	-2.82	-0.39	-4.37*	-2.71	-0.78
Neighborhood with a low level of Belgian people	-3.95	-7.95*	2.23	3.85	-5.31	2.11
Residential instability (ref.cat.=stability)	-1.76	-0.33	-1.72	3.83**	-0.40	-1.95
Social networks in the neighborhood	1.61**	1.80**	-1.02	1.57**	0.82	1.43**
<b>Summary data</b>						
N	1983	1987	1986	1986	1991	2001
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	0.09 (0.08)	0.06 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.07 (0.05)	0.05 (0.04)	0.07 (0.06)

# Discussion

- Confirmation of past research:
  - negative influence of living in an urban environment
  - negative influence of feelings of insecurity
  - positive influence of social networks in the neighborhood
- ➔ Not only useful in explaining differences in parents' perceptions toward children's independent mobility, but also in parents' views of their adolescents' structured and unstructured leisure time!

# Discussion

- New insights:
  - Living in a more diverse neighborhood and living in a residential unstable situation, is associated with a higher score on the importance of cultural activities
    - Cultural activities= activities parents and children can do on their own? Meeting places?
    - Confrontation with a diversity of cultural traditions stimulates cultural participation?
  - Living in a neighborhood with a lower level of Belgian people, is associated with a lower level of parental support
    - Parents living in these neighborhoods have other priorities (e.g. homework) ?
    - Lack of appropriate and adequate leisure facilities in these neighborhoods?

# Recommendations for future research

- Focus on the relation between availability of leisure opportunities and parents' views
- Focus on the mechanisms behind the impact of neighborhood characteristics onto parents' perceptions (qualitative in-depth studies)
- Focus on the influence of parental perceptions on adolescents' leisure time activities

# Questions?

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