

Exploring the emotional geography of the leisure time physical activity space with mothers of young children.

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ABSTRACT

Many women experience the transition to motherhood as a disconnection from the embodied and emotional self due to the demands articulated through contemporary discourses of motherhood. Using a qualitative approach, this paper explores the everyday emotional geographies of leisure time physical activity (LTPA), the emotions experienced, the physical and metaphorical spaces created, and the connections to embodied selves of mothers with young children. The findings indicate that despite discourses of intensive mothering, immobilising emotions and overwhelming tiredness, some women not only created a space for LTPA in their busy lives but were able to create connections between body, space and emotions. These connections and the emotions evoked were largely associated with spaces outside of the home. Understanding how women define and use these spaces, and negotiate and transform the self, can allow us to explore the diversity of women's experiences of physical activity and their concepts of LTPA as 'personal space'.

Introduction

In 1999, Aitchison discussed the contribution of geography to leisure and understandings of the spatiality of gender and sexuality. Her review also highlighted how feminist geographies have explored the social and material landscape of space, providing alternative ways of 'seeing leisure' (Aitchison, 1999, p. 35). Feminist geographers have explored the linkages between emotional subjectivity of individuals and the influence of social and physical environments in which they live (Bondi, Davidson, & Smith, 2007). This interest has extended to exploring feminist theories of the body and embodiment (Simonsen, 2000) while leisure research has focused on how the body and gendered discourses shape women's experience of leisure (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007). However, rather than examining space, leisure conceptualisation has tended to be framed in terms of time (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007). As Caudwell and Browne (2011, p. 117) argue, the links between leisure and geographical 'thinking and concepts remain underdeveloped'. In particular, we also note the importance of connections between body, space and emotions and the 'need to uncover the emotional world as it meets the physical world, as it is reflexively experienced' Mackian (2004, p. 616).

Mackian's (2004) comments are highly relevant to women's transition to motherhood as it changes

how women experience and engage with their bodies and emotions. It is also a period when some women struggle with the emotional demands of motherhood to find the time and space to engage in any form of leisure as their embodied and emotional selves are challenged by contemporary discourses of motherhood. The dominant ideology of idealised Western middle-class motherhood 'as it is currently perceived and practiced in patriarchal societies' (O'Reilly, 2010, p. 17) is underpinned by sacrifice and constant and endless emotional and physical availability to family members (O'Reilly, 2010; Wearing, 1984, 1996). These powerful and pervasive gendered discourses work to often leave women feeling a range of emotions that impact their well-being, such as feeling trapped, stressed, angry and frustrated (Currie, 2004).

However, women have identified that physical activity is an important aspect of their wellbeing after the birth of a child (Currie, 2004, 2009). Wearing (1990) and Currie (2004) argued that through resisting normalising discourses of motherhood, women were able to create leisure spaces for their own enjoyment. Wearing's (1998) work explored the physical and metaphorical spaces of leisure where women could pursue their desires and pleasure in embodied ways that contributed to their well-being. Drawing on the work on leisure time physical activity (LTPA) (e.g. Lloyd, O'Brien & Riot, 2016; Skowron, Stodolska, & Shinew, 2008; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010), we explore women's everyday LTPA, as a contrast to passive leisure (such as doing nothing, shopping, watching TV and reading a book) or physical activity with its links to regimes of health care and specified outcomes.

Evans and Allen-Collinson (2014) argue that the embodied leisure experience of women with young children is an area that continues to be under researched. We therefore also examine the movement of the body in leisure spaces, the connections made and the emotions experienced by mothers with young children. We acknowledge that women's leisure is a deeply contested notion, with the prevailing literature suggesting mothers face a broad range of constraints. However, we contend that LTPA is a form of leisure that is meaningful in different ways for different women. It is also a complex emotional, embodied and physically active experience performed in a range of

spaces. As we have situated LTPA within the sociocultural milieu of women's lives, we argue that LTPA is not necessarily more than 'leisure in the round' (Stanley, 1988), but an important aspect of the everyday meanings, choices, practices and performances that allowed women to engage with the self in ways that changed how they felt. We therefore conceptualise LTPA and its associated 'away' spaces as a marked contrast to women's everyday experience of the performance of motherhood within the spaces of the home. We now explore the relevant literature, followed by a discussion of the methods, study findings and our concluding remarks.

Emotional geographies, embodiment, performance and leisure spaces

Anderson and Smith (2001) argue that emotional geographies give consideration to how emotions affect our world and lives. They suggest that emotions constitute ways of 'knowing, being and doing' and highlight the need for more work that recognises the link between emotions and the spaces and places in which they are experienced (Anderson & Smith, 2001, p. 8). Davidson and Milligan (2004) note emotional geographies are concerned with the emotions connecting people to places, landscapes and objects in particular situations. Where we live and how we enact our lives is mediated by feelings that affect our sense of time, place and space (Bondi et al., 2007). It is through exploring various senses of space that 'we could become better placed to appreciate the emotionally dynamic spatiality of contemporary social life' (Davidson & Milligan, 2004, p. 534). Davidson and Milligan (2004) point out that it is through the body that emotions are both felt and experienced, and argue that 'emotions ... take place within and around this closest of spatial scales' (p. 523). For women in particular, the 'body' is seen as an important form of 'space' and integral to the feminist concept of 'performativity'.

Much of the work of feminist geographers has drawn on Butler's (1990) notion of performativity, and the repetition and 'doings' of performances and acts by the body through which women constitute gendered subjectivities (Wood & Smith, 2004). Feminist leisure theorists have also drawn on Butler's work to explore how women resist gendered identities and constitute other femininities and subjectivities through repeated performative acts (Fullagar, 2008; Wearing, 1998). Wearing's use of Foucault's (1984, p. 252) heterotopia to examine the 'singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose function are different or even opposite of others' provides a platform from which to examine how mothers of young children redefine the emotional geographies of LTPA. Drawing on Wearing (1998), we adopt her notion of space, where women can move away from routine tasks to an emotional space, an activity or physical space and a pleasure space where they can constitute other subjectivities. However, while Wearing's work is useful to frame our notion of space it, does not explore how embodiment and emotions work together in ways that transform relations to self in leisure spaces. This is significant as motherhood is associated with a number of key emotions and discourses that often prevent women engaging in LTPA.

Mothers, LTPA, emotions and space

Strazdins and Broom (2004) argue that women with young children tend to do more 'emotion work' within the family leading to exhaustion and distress. The subsequent tiredness and fatigue associated with the ethic of care are significant in preventing women from not only engaging in LTPA (Brown, Brown, Miller, & Hansen, 2001; Brown, Mishra, Lee, & Bauman, 2000) but also from experiencing any changes in emotions or embodiment. Over time, the ethic of care has extended into intensive mothering. This in turn has morphed into 'New momism' and its associated demands that women devote themselves emotionally, physically and psychologically to their children (Douglas & Michaels, 2004) and to the impossible ideals of motherhood while reinforcing the gendered dualities of feminine/nurturer and masculine/provider (O'Reilly, 2010). In contrast, Currie (2004) highlights that for mothers with young children, engaging in LTPA can leave them less stressed and

calmer. Other researchers have found that engaging in LTPA often transforms women's emotional subjectivity. Spowart, Burrows, and Shaw (2010) found surfing provided the space through which mothers could experience embodied pleasure and gain self-knowledge. Drawing on feminist theories of affect, Pavlidis and Fullagar (2013) identified the leisure spaces of roller derby as sites through which women could experience emotions such as passion, pride, pleasure and play. Although these examples highlight unique leisure spaces, work on emotion play for women recovering from depression found that 'day to day' leisure was a space where women could experience 'pleasure, autonomy and connectedness' (Fullagar, 2008, p. 48). Following Fullagar (2008, p. 37), we also draw on a feminist poststructural approach to consider how emotions are 'social, relational and embodied'. Feminist poststructuralism argues for an understanding of the embodied subject in which the mind and body are enacted as lived interconnected aspects of the self, mediated by discourse (Fullagar, 2008). It allows an examination of how power relations and discourses work to regulate home and leisure spaces and the emotions and bodies that perform in them (Aitchison, 2003). As Currie (2004) indicates, the home is a space of enclosure that works to entrap women. At the same time, power relations can be subverted or resisted in ways that allow for a transformation of norms and performances of gendered and embodied identity (Butler, 1990; Fullagar, 2008; Wearing, 1998). Women can work on and constitute their subjectivity, to open up a space for 'self-fashioning' and a chance of thinking of oneself in ways other than the norm predicts (Heyes, 2007, p. 119). Wearing (1998, p. 146) suggests these 'spaces' are where women can 'expand oneself through negotiation, resistance and transformation'.

Extending this line of theorising, linked with emotional geographies, we examine the spatiality and temporality of emotions of women's everyday LTPA. In particular, we are concerned with emotions and 'the way they coalesce around and within certain spaces' (Bondi et al., 2007, p. 3), used for LTPA, creating emotional connections through the feelings that are evoked. Drawing together emotional geographies, performativity and embodiment, we explore two main questions: (1) How do private spaces of the home work to limit women's engagement in LTPA and affect their

emotional and embodied relation to self and (2) How do public spaces and practices of LTPA open women up to different emotional and embodied performances of self?

Methods

A qualitative study was conducted in South East Queensland in Australia to explore the LTPA practices of mothers with young children and the emotions experienced, the spaces created and the connections to embodied selves found through participation in LTPA. As we have detailed our research approach elsewhere (Lloyd et al., 2016; O'Brien, Lloyd & Ringuet-Riot, 2014), here we briefly outline the key characteristics of the participants, the research focus and the themes identified. The participants were predominantly middle class, Caucasian, heterosexual and Australian born. As such they had access to resources for LTPA, including their capacities to create time and space as well as social support from husbands, family and friends. The majority had engaged in physical activity in various forms, including organised sport, walking, swimming, running and going to the gym, before the birth of their children, and many had returned to these postnatally, with others taking up other forms of LTPA (see Table 1).

Most women had at least one child under two, five women had more than one child and one woman had five children. Nine women were pregnant at the time the interviews were conducted. The majority were married or in a long-term de facto relationship, two mothers were employed full-time, nine part-time and six were not in paid employment. One woman was studying part-time.

Respondents ranged in age from 26 to 41 years.

The semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions specifically questioned women about leisure and physical activity, with the majority of them articulating a difference between the two. Women were clear in making a distinction between any physical activity they engaged in with their children, often at home, and the spaces in which they engaged in their own LTPA. We were therefore interested in understanding the processes through which women created the space for LTPA after they had children. The term LTPA was not utilised in the interview process; rather, it was

women's articulation of the distinctions between passive and active leisure and the movements of self in spaces away from the home that were explored.

The analysis utilised a process of constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to identify key concepts and themes. We acknowledge that the findings are relevant to the 18 women who volunteered to be interviewed and cannot be seen as representative of all women with young children. Two major themes related to the LTPA space were identified. First, the immobilising emotional spaces of the home and second, the spaces outside the home where the performance of LTPA was a transformative site of embodied pleasure.

Insert Table 1 here. Participants' demographic details and physical activity history.

Analysis and discussion

Immobilising emotions and confining spaces

In describing the emotions associated with the home space as immobilising, we are not attempting to create a dualism wherein home spaces are essentialised as 'bad' and those out of the home 'good'. Rather, we are using it to illustrate how the emotional and embodied demands of the performance of idealised motherhood in the space of the home work in ways that often leave little room for other performances of self. For many women, the gendered space of the home was, as suggested by Domosh and Seager (2001, p. 33), a 'trap that separated them from the rest of the world'. O'Reilly (2010) points out within discourses of 'new momism', women 'believe that they must be at home 24/7 for the benefit of the child for at least the first 3–5 years ... to do otherwise would be ... unnatural, for both the child and mother'. Discourses of 'new momism' also reinforce the 'private/public divide with mothering performed in the isolation of the home' (O'Reilly, 2010, p. 23). As a consequence, the emotional landscape of the home and the embodied demands to perform motherhood were often cited as reasons for inactivity. The most common emotion evoked was that of guilt, a powerful emotion linked to 'good mothering' discourses and infused in the social

space of the home (Sutherland, 2010). These powerful discourses of motherhood articulate an-other orientation (O'Grady, 2005) that left women with feelings of 'selfishness' should they desire to do something for themselves or be somewhere else. Becky, for example said,

There's so many things that I just go, 'that's mother guilt'. I don't want to do this cause, no I couldn't do this. I feel like ... I want to go and do something that's enjoyable for me but yet they're missing out? ...I'd feel selfish to do it.

Although Becky's comment illustrates a desire to 'go and do something' that will take her from her responsibilities into an enjoyable space, she is unable to move away from feelings of guilt and the performance of motherhood. The resulting frustration can create tension in the home space.

Discourses of intensive mothering not only position the child's needs as more important than the mother's (Douglas & Michaels, 2004), but also centre the performance of motherhood within the home. It was therefore difficult to 'justify' creating space for LTPA if women had not fulfilled their domestic and maternal responsibilities. Gabby, for example, didn't have time during the day to engage in LTPA and when her husband came home, her excuse was, 'oh, no, I'm tired, I've got to cook the dinner, I've got to do the housework or whatever'. Gabby's comment illustrates how the overwhelming workloads and assumptions of intensive mothering can leave women feeling a profound sense of embodied exhaustion. The performance of motherhood within the space of home and the subsequent exhaustion and emotional depletion women often experience can limit other performances of self, such as the enjoyment women may experience through engaging in LTPA.

However, women in this study did not blame the performance of motherhood; instead, they engaged in self-blame, often referring to their 'laziness'. For example, Bea stated: 'this morning I thought, 'no, I'm going to go for a walk' so it was, it didn't happen yesterday ... that wasn't a family responsibility, it was laziness because it was hot and I didn't want to push a pram'. These self-blaming relations (O'Grady, 2005) evoked feelings of failure. Failure is an intense emotion, provoking guilt and shame (Sutherland, 2010) and for these women was also immobilising, creating another way to trap them within the home. It was then difficult to move the self into a space beyond feelings of fatigue, failure and shame. Cassie indicated that her lack of activity was,

My own fault. I should make myself walk, more, I keep saying every week, 'I'll start', go in the mornings. I'm up so early I may as well be going for a walk ... [what] Stops me? ... laziness, I think ... you're still a bit tired, ... when you get up. Just forcing yourself to go and do it.

These comments highlight the difficulty women often have in relinquishing 'feminised emotions associated with not being a good enough woman' (Fullagar, 2008, p. 43) and fall into 'gendered emotional traps' that limit the performance of selfhood and undermine any sense of entitlement to leisure. The physical and emotional immobility created by discourses of motherhood also influenced women's perception that they were not engaging in appropriate levels of LTPA to ensure good health. Women spoke about being 'disappointed' (Becky, Di), 'a bit down on yourself' (Elise), feeling 'embarrassed' (Lisa) or repeatedly emphasised that they 'should' exercise. Fullagar (2002, p. 78) notes that health promotion discourses are replete with a 'moral repertoire of "shoulds"'. Often women indicated that as they were 'at home' (Bonnie), they 'should' have time to engage in LTPA. These adverse self-feelings had the potential to make it even more difficult for women to break away from the emotional boundedness of the home.

Leisure time physical activity was often a space of expectations, and women again engaged in self-blame for their inability to move to a space that enabled their participation. Some women exercised through a sense of doing the 'right' thing (i.e. be a healthy mum). For example, Elise said that 'it's something you've got to do ... I can do that again in two days' time, and if I keep doing that three times a week I'll see the results'. There is little here that speaks of creating an emotional space of pleasure of enjoyment or changes to embodied subjectivity. Engagement was about achieving results, measuring up to standards and continuing the performance. Lisa also saw LTPA as 'a bit of a chore' but felt she needed to 'change the way I think about exercise and then maybe I'd enjoy it more'. While for Eva, LTPA was 'a set time, you get it done and then you get on with your day'. There was also a prescriptive and self-surveillance element to women's engagement as they spoke about getting rid of any extra weight. Discourses of the new 'momism' and its demands that women work on their bodies to become 'quickly slender' post-birth 'makes it much more likely that women will

internalise the responsibility for the failure and experience even more guilt, self-recrimination, and/or anger at themselves' (O'Brien Hallstein, 2011, p. 130). Tammy said 'especially after you've had the baby and you've got a bit of extra weight and you think, "oh, got to do a bit extra"'.

Certainly, popular media images and discourses where high-profile women magically regain pre-baby bodies also contributed to the sense that LTPA was duty driven (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004).

Monica discussed the pressure and confusion she felt from various views on and images of how a mother should look:

After I had Lachlan I was very motivated to get back to pre-pregnancy size. That was definitely ... a huge pressure, I don't know if it was just something I put on myself or if I felt it ... society thing where ... all the superstars in the magazines and they all appear to just ...

O'Brien Hallstein (2011, p. 130) argues that 'having celebrity moms held up as the norm also places even more unrealistic demands on "normal", noncelebrity moms'. While not all women may have taken up media discourses in constituting their post-pregnant body, Dworkin and Wachs (2004, p. 612) argue that contemporary ideals of fit femininity work to create a third shift of fitness practices in order for mothers to get their body back post-pregnancy. This shift in addition to household labour and child care requires a 'daunting' investment of time and energy and lack of success is considered a failure of motherhood (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004). Perhaps of greater concern is that the practices associated with the third shift of bodily labour often work to intensify women's self-surveillance and their perceptions they are not doing enough to return to a pre-pregnant norm (Dworkin & Wachs, 2004). In contrast, despite discourses of intensive mothering, immobilising emotions and overwhelming tiredness, some women were creating space for LTPA in their busy lives. Interestingly, for these women, the 'doings' (Wood & Smith, 2004) of LTPA and the emotions evoked were largely associated with spaces outside of the home. We now consider how women's emotional relationship with themselves changed through LTPA and how the LTPA space facilitated the connection with their embodied and emotional self.

Embodying emotions: pleasure and performing in the LTPA space

How women began to engage with the 'doings' of LTPA was often not planned and sometimes occurred as they negotiated normalised discourses of health and idealised notions of fit motherhood. In some ways, women were complicit in reproducing self-surveillance. However, rather than leading back to normalisation, the practices allowed women to engage with their embodied selves. Women mobilised a range of 'positive' health discourses to overcome the stasis they spoke about within the space of the home. Heyes (2007, p. 135, italics in original) suggests changes in our relation to our embodied selves allows us not only to 'think differently', but also to '*make ourselves*' in ways that are different. In this way, LTPA was more than a counter narrative or resistance to discourses of motherhood. Women engaged in LTPA for the way it allowed them to feel different. Leanne indicated that: 'I just know that exercise is so good for stimulating your mind and getting endorphins going'. Becky also mobilised biochemical explanations to legitimise her LTPA engagement saying, 'I guess those hormones keep me going for the rest of the day'. Other women spoke about how being active 'kept them sane' (Rene), 'got the heart rate up' (Tammy), suggesting that despite the connections to biochemical discourses, they were beginning to link their engagement in LTPA with changes in their embodied and emotional self, not just their physical self. Some women weren't able to articulate exactly what it was about moving away from the home and the responsibilities of motherhood that enabled them to feel different. Candice, who enjoyed walking, tried to capture how it made her feel,

whereas it's physical, going out and going for a walk is so much more refreshing ... I ... escapism ... it's rejuvenation ... you leave everything behind and you just breathe the fresh air again and it's just so nice. Love it ... I can't even explain it.

Rene, on the other hand, initially focused on health outcomes: 'it keeps you ... healthy in your mind, your body'. However, a little later in the interview, she also said: 'I don't know what it is. Something I enjoy about it so ... keep at it ... I'm better to go somewhere for my exercise'. Both comments illustrate the importance of moving away from the burdens associated with the home 'space'.

Engaging in LTPA allowed women to 'feel' different in a space beyond the home. Women spoke about engaging with the body as being 'exciting' (Becky), 'energising' (Di, Eva, Kim, Gabby), but also 'relaxing' (Leanne) and 'calming' (Bonnie). It was the movement away from the embodied demands of the home (of depletion and tiredness) that spurred their continued engagement. While Shogan (2002) argues that spatial constraints of sport enable participation, it was often the lack of constraint in other spaces that gave women the opportunity to 'acquire a bodily understanding of the space' (Shogan, 2002, p. 32) of LTPA. Tammy initially drew on a discourse of healthy mother and 'what you hear from research and stuff like that' to begin a programme of walking after the birth of her son. She also began noticing 'so many benefits': weight loss, improved moods and feeling 'fitter and healthier'. These are commonly understood and accepted 'outcomes' of exercise; however, LTPA often goes beyond these to tap into embodied feelings associated with particular spaces. Like Wearing's (1998, p. 149) notion of a pleasure space to fill with 'familiar or loved activities', respondents chose to fill the LTPA space with activities because of the change in embodiment they experienced. Tammy also began to make connections to moving herself to another space that affected the way she felt: 'So it's not really all about getting your heart rate going but ... that exercise also feels really good and it's different'. It was the feelings generated, feeling good and different to their everyday embodied experiences that underpinned women's continued engagement in LTPA. Fullagar (2008, p. 49) argues that 'emotion play is crucial to opening the metaphoric movement of identity that enables different desires and feelings about the self'. Gabby's account illustrates how different emotions experienced in spaces away from the home allowed her to perform another identity than that of 'mother'. Before motherhood, she never worried about exercise. However, after having a baby, she started working with a personal trainer and realised, 'it's not just about that, it's about feeling good about yourself and feeling fit and healthy ... I definitely love it. Love it. I couldn't give it up now. Now that I've really got stuck into it'.

Gabby's expression of love for LTPA suggests a joyfulness and 'being in the moment' (Fullagar, 2008,

p. 49) that allowed her to feel different about herself. She was now someone who was able to claim, express and experience enjoyment through LTPA. In this regard, Gabby's leisure was a pleasure space that opened her up to an expansion of the self (Wearing, 1998). Her example illustrates how she had let go of discourses of motherhood, indicating that she needed to be away from her daughter, and hence she was resisting the self-sacrificial discourses of good mothering. Gabby also reiterated that if her daughter was with her, she would be unable to relax and relinquish her caring relations; so, she now makes sure that she creates the space for LTPA in her everyday life. Currie (2009, p. 661) also argues that 'gaining some space and time away' from routines of the home contributed to mothers' well-being. Importantly, it was how women negotiated discourses of motherhood to constitute the space as meaningful, and a way through which to engage with the emotional self differently.

Leisure spaces allow women to explore and expand their potentialities, as well as challenge the subjectivities of motherhood (Wearing, 1998). Spaces away from the home were significant in allowing women in this study to begin to feel a different connection to an emotional and embodied self. Grace described how when she played tennis she was, 'in my space using my energy, and all I'm thinking about is what my skills are'. In this way, women were performing skills that enabled them to connect with their embodied selves in a space of their own making. Knowing how they felt when they engaged in LTPA was central to women's continued engagement and as Wearing (1998) suggests offers the possibility for transformation of subjectivities. Kelly also described her LTPA as 'my own little domain', the 'peace and quiet' that 'sporty leisure' afforded her. Claiming space, such as a 'little domain', is antithetical to discourses of 'new momism' that articulate a home-based child-centred caring. In this way, through the letting go of the demands that she be constantly available to her child, Kelly engaged with herself differently in a space away from her child. It was the meaning that Kelly attached to the activity and the changed embodiment that allowed her to develop an 'ethos of lightness' (Fullagar, 2008, p. 45) that differed to her everyday experience of motherhood. Kelly also spoke about the lack of other people's expectations and interruptions and intrusions into

the space being central to the experience. The LTPA space was away from the home and all its associated emotional and physical demands. In this sense, the embodied emotions evoked and enacted were interwoven with particular sites and contexts.

LTPA took women into a space where the pleasure they experienced led to repeated performances. Di's account of her experience with walking highlights the 'doings' (Wood & Smith, 2004) of the performative aspect of LTPA. She said, 'I've found from walking every day that I'm more inclined to walk every day. If I go for a week without walking then it's harder to start again'. Women also continued to perform the activity because of the way it made them feel. These 'personal spaces' enabled women to explore the pleasurable aspects of LTPA in ways of their own choosing (Wearing, 1998). Gabby also found that it was the repeated performance of the activity and the change in embodiment that led to continued engagement:

I had a great workout. I find it strange to hear myself say that now because I wouldn't have thought that before ... I came back from there really happy and rested ... I never thought I would love exercise.

For Gabby, and many of the other women, LTPA spaces enabled them to feel good about doing something for themselves and engaging with their bodies for the pleasure they experienced. Fullagar (2008, p. 48) argues that 'leisure can open up a host of relations to self', including pleasure. Candice, for example, indicated that when she went for a bike ride, she enjoyed the experience of 'your body being used'. Bea also felt 'the need to move, to feel good. To feel like I'm shedding even a bit of a bad day ... what would relax me and make me feel better is a walk'. Bea's comment suggests that she recognised how the repeated performance of walking took her to a space that enhanced her well-being. While these women refer to specific activities, their examples illustrate it was the engagement with the body, the feelings evoked and the meanings women created through active embodiment that allowed them to 'play with another sense of self' (Fullagar, 2008, p. 46).

Women also recognised that the space they had created to engage in LTPA was where they did not have to perform their identity as a mother. Gabby, for example, said: 'It feels good that ... you've done something for yourself and I haven't let her (daughter) stop me'. While Gabby's daughter was unable in a literal sense to 'stop' her, the comment illustrates how LTPA opened women up to other possibilities of feminine identity. Fullagar (2008, p. 48) also argued that leisure enables women to 'play with possibilities of becoming a feminine self that is defined beyond masculine oriented subject positions (e.g. wife, mother, daughter) and normalised ideals of superwoman'. Grace captured the personal importance of this notion: 'for that hour and a half to two hours ... I'm in my zone ... it's all about me'. Being lost in a space that she occupied alone represented a striking contrast to how women are often lost in the family home where their identity is subsumed by family responsibilities. Through the emotions experienced in the LTPA space, these women allowed themselves to explore their own potential, and in doing so went beyond discourses of motherhood that position women's space within the boundaries of home and family.

Concluding remarks

Within the private and gendered space of the home, 'good mothering' discourses worked to create a range of physical and emotional demands that were centred on attending to the needs of others. Women's emotion work within the landscape of the family home at times left them feeling trapped, angry and frustrated (Currie, 2004). While women have reported that being active generally makes them feel more energised, their participation was frequently linked to discourses that promote physical activity and being fit, as responsibilities that all 'good' mothers need to fulfil. For many women, this often represents a further burden added to an already hectic and demanding life. As we have highlighted, women in this study frequently felt they 'should' be doing more or were not doing enough of the right type of physical activity. This and other forms of disempowering mother guilt discourses worked to produce immobilising emotions surrounding being active. The other

orientation often challenged women emotionally and exhausted them physically, making it difficult for them to break away from the spatial control of the domestic sphere.

In contrast, a key element in this study was the change women articulated when talking about connecting with their embodied and emotional self through LTPA. Emotions related to the 'away', more public space of LTPA offered women the opportunity to open up to other possibilities of self-constitution. Through processes, which were often accidental at first, women found that the repeated performances of LTPA took them to another space that allowed them to constitute their emotional lives differently. As MacKian (2004) suggests, the way that women reflect on contemporary space and articulate, negotiate and represent emotional landscapes is often expressed through spatial metaphors such as 'distancing' oneself, 'engaging', 'joining' and 'embracing'. Similarly, for the women in this study, everyday emotions were used to make sense of women's experiences of complex emotional landscapes. Women mapped the emotional landscape of LTPA through descriptors that captured a range of emotions, such as 'feeling good', 'peace and quiet', 'excitement' and 'energised', and illustrated a movement of self beyond home-bound emotions and activities.

LTPA offers women alternative or different places that act as 'counter-sites or compensatory sites to those of everyday activity' (Wearing, 1998, p. 146). The pleasure and enjoyment women experienced through engaging in LTPA led them to repeat the activity. Through the practice of LTPA, women began realising the importance of doing something for themselves and to engage with the self in ways other than being a mother and wife. It was not simply resisting norms of motherhood, but creating different connections to themselves and attachments to the spaces in which they engaged in LTPA. It was often the lack of constraint in these spaces that allowed women to open themselves to performing a different emotional self. The emotional and embodied changes women experienced through engaging in LTPA in a space that they associated with pleasure and enjoyment allowed mothers of young children to claim this space for themselves. Similar to the emotion play in

Fullagar's (2008, p. 49) work on women's recovery from depression, the movement of identity enabled a different connection and feelings about the self 'that are alive, vital, and becoming'. For some women, this opening up and becoming allowed them to 'lose' themselves in other subjectivities and spaces.

For mothers of young children and especially women with new babies, the space of LTPA offers possibilities of self-reflection and self-enhancement – new spaces to constitute meaning. Contact with spaces that are different or other to the private sphere of the home can also add to the variety in terms of the constitution of identity (Wearing, 1998). Outside of home, leisure spaces enable women to engage in 'performative acts' that allow a 'becoming' beyond that possible at home. Women generate new perspectives, new bodies and new ways of thinking and feeling in new spaces. Personal space (both physical and metaphorical) allows women to 'explore their own desires and pleasures and perform acts which allow them to become women in their own right, to constitute diverse subjectivities and femininities which go beyond what women have been told they should be' (Wearing, 1998, p. 149). While LTPA held its own meaning for each woman, it became a space where they could not only think of themselves differently, but also perform and feel differently in ways that enhanced their embodied and emotional well-being over time.

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