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Experiences of Longing in Daily Life and Associations to Well-being among Frail Older Adults Receiving Home Care

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Introduction



- ◇ All over the world, communities face **the challenge of maintaining well-being among older adults** → understanding the resources required to maintain well-being among community-dwelling older adults is essential.
- ◇ Longing from a caring science perspective → **a driver for well-being**, but it has not yet been investigated among frail older adults.

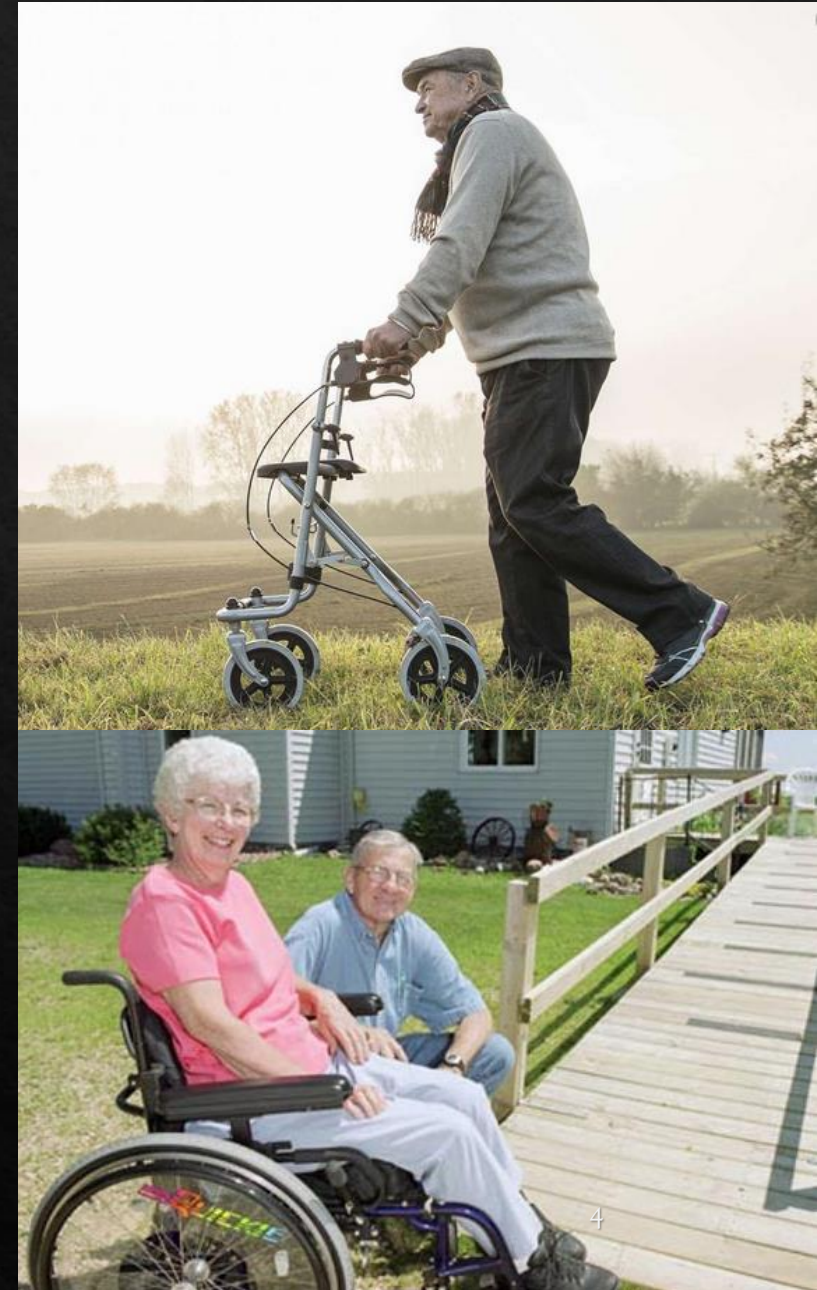
Background

The ability for older adults **to remain independent for as long as possible** has become all the more vital → it has the potential to ease the demands on the social and health care system in **society** (Barlow et al., 2002).



Background

- ◆ Older adults can feel safe, independent and autonomous when they are in a familiar and meaningful environment → which is the main reason why they wish to age-in-place and remain in their homes throughout their lifetime (Tan et al., 2015; Dahlin-Ivanoff et al., 2007) → Understanding community-dwelling older adults' recourses for maintaining and establishing well-being becomes vital.



Background

- ◆ At the same time, **frail older adults, as a vulnerable group, have more trouble than the general older population in attaining a particular level of well-being** when confronted with an array of changes in life (Niebor and Cramm, 2018a; Näsman et al., 2019).

Theoretical framework

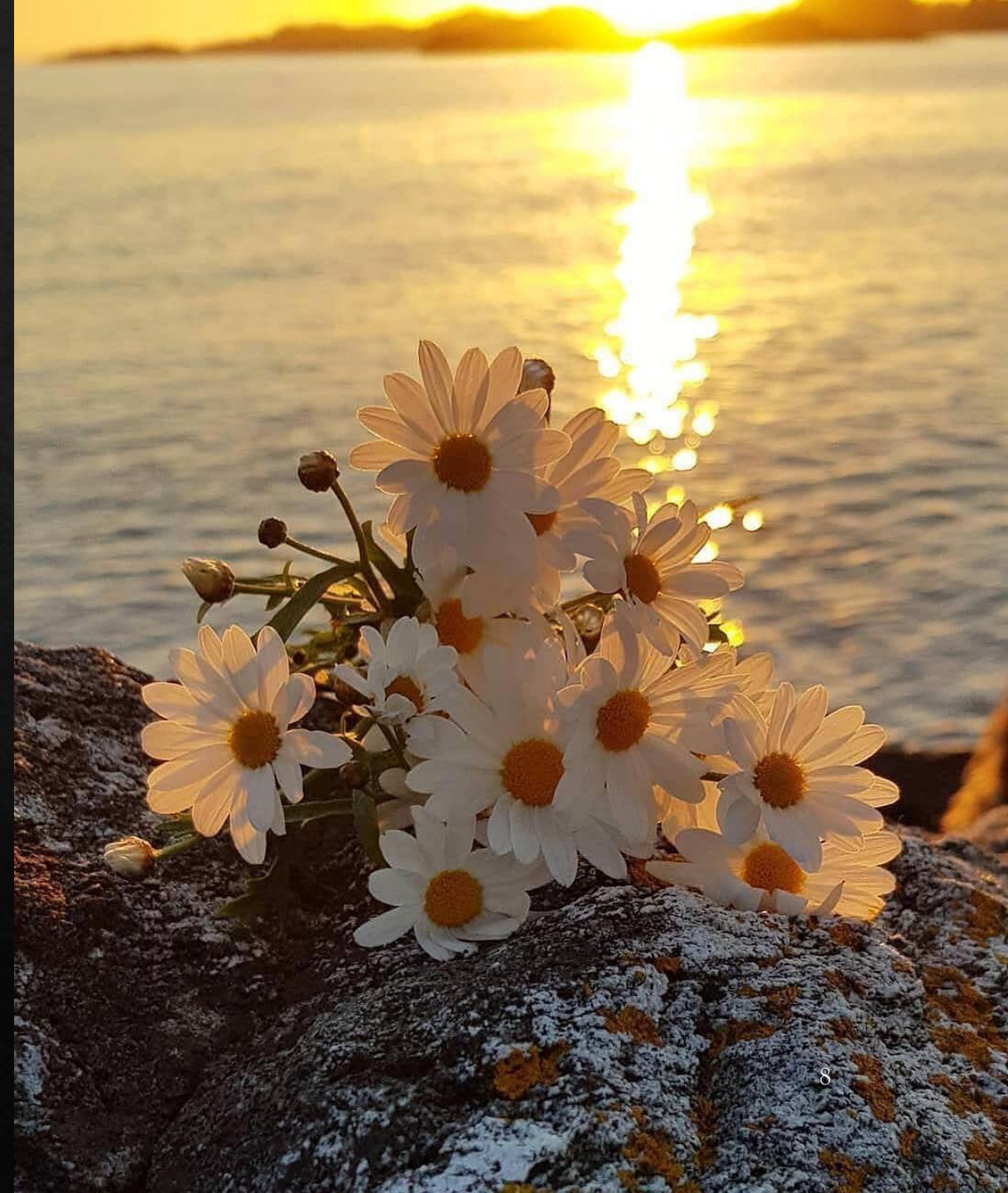
- ◆ **Caritative caring theory** (Eriksson, 2018; Lindström et al., 2018)
- ◆ From a caring science perspective, longing can function as an internal resource or trait toward well-being and health (Eriksson, 2018; Ueland et al., 2018).
- ◆ When longing as a driving force (Eriksson, 2018) cannot be fulfilled, the older adults feel that their dignity is disrespected, **which can create a negative longing instead** → by extension, this type of negative longing can eventually extinguish the spark of life.

Theoretical framework

◆ Although there is a lot of research on well-being, **not much has been made on longing** (Ueland, 2013; Ueland et al., 2018; Ueland et al., 2020) and especially not regarding the relation between longing and well-being in frail older adults.

Aim

To explore frail older adults' experiences of longing in daily life and the relation between longing and well-being from a caring science perspective.





The study

- ◆ The study uses a hermeneutical approach and follows a qualitative explorative design.
- ◆ A total of 17 participants (12 female and five male), aged 72-95 years and in different life situations .



Questions were included in the interview guide (for example):

01



"WHAT PROVIDES YOU WITH JOY OF LIFE AND WELL-BEING IN DAILY LIFE?"

02

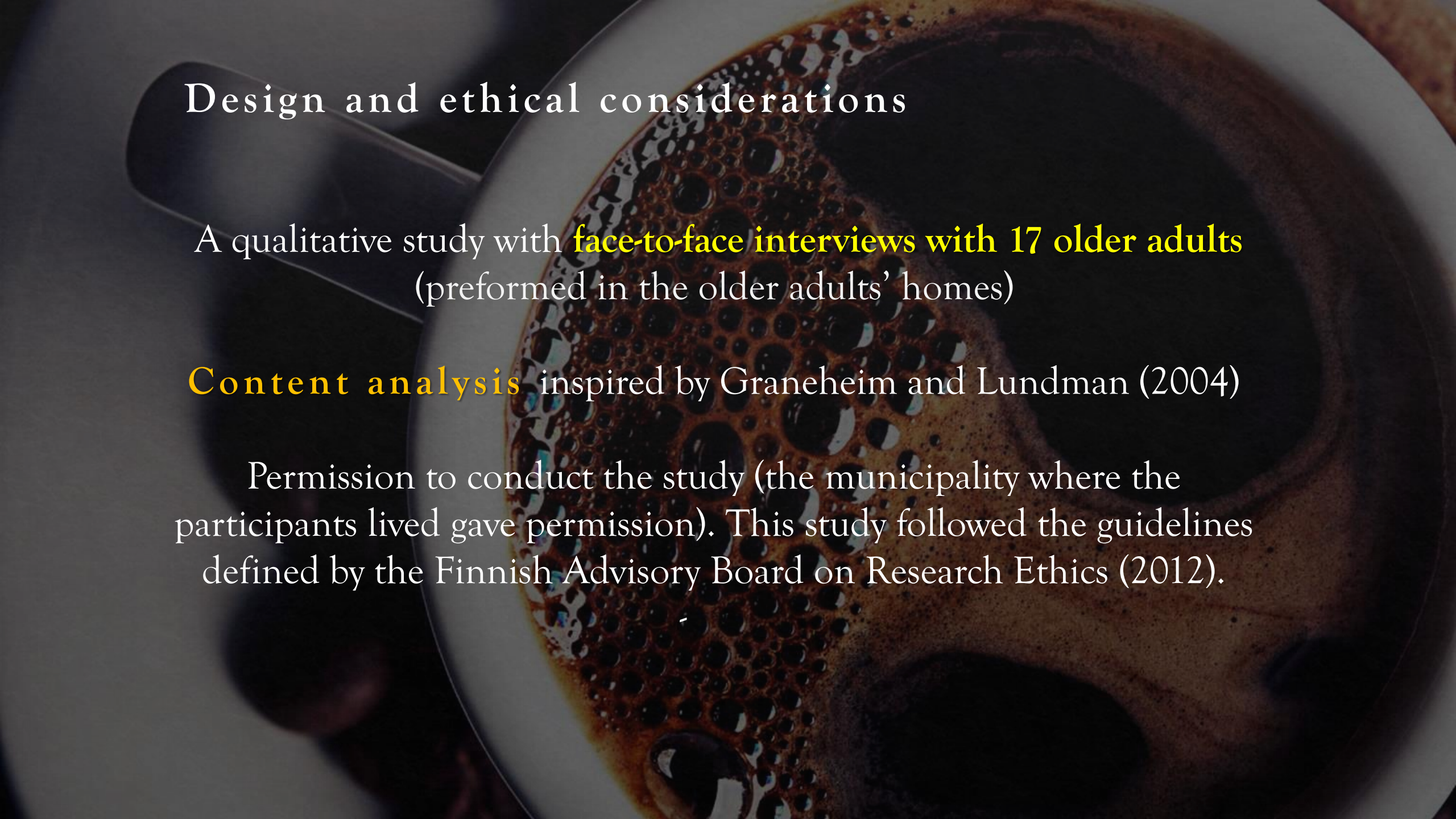


"WHAT DO YOU LACK, DREAM OF OR LONG FOR IN YOUR DAILY LIFE?"

03



"IS THERE SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP YOU WITH FULFILLING THE THINGS YOU LONG FOR?".



Design and ethical considerations

A qualitative study with **face-to-face interviews with 17 older adults**
(performed in the older adults' homes)

Content analysis inspired by Graneheim and Lundman (2004)

Permission to conduct the study (the municipality where the participants lived gave permission). This study followed the guidelines defined by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Ethics (2012).

The longing that the frail older adults wished for and could be fulfilled led to well-being.

A longing that could not be fulfilled anymore but which they still dreamed about and recalled in memory (e.g. things they did earlier in life) could lead to well-being if they no longer felt that this longing needed to be fulfilled anymore.

Alonging that was involuntarily left unfulfilled led to ill-being and ultimately suffering (since a person's curtailed freedom to create their own existence and fulfill a longing was seen as a violation against their unique identity as a person)



The results uncovered three themes:

- ◆ Longing for social contacts
- ◆ Longing for nature
- ◆ Longing creativity, aesthetics and music
- ◆ Longing was positively related to well-being when the older adults were able to fulfil their longings.



Theme nr 1: **Longing for social contacts**

These social contacts consisted of both a longing for

→ **social contacts within the home** and a longing for

→ **social contacts outside the home.**



Theme nr 1: **Longing for social contacts**

- ◆ The frail older adults mentioned a longing for **a support person** (home care personnel or a volunteer) as a social contact. → a support person coming to their home would be valuable and bring well-being to their daily life.
- ◆ *This is how one states this: “...just having a friend to talk to (at home) would be good. Someone who would come home and play cards with me ... to have a friend to talk to ... who ... would cheer me up. It would be important ... (P13)*



Theme nr 1: **Longing for social contacts**

- ◆ One male participant mentioned that **the lack of social contacts is great**, but that is because his closest friends have past away and he found it **difficult to establish new friendships in old age**.
“Well, in a way you are missing everyone (former friends), but it is difficult to get in touch with them, when they are gone, they are gone ...” (P3).



Theme nr 1: **Longing for social contacts**

- ◆ Here's how one participant who lived with her husband expressed this:
- ◆ *“Firstly, I wouldn't want to live here. I would like to live where there's a little more happening... I am so, trapped here ... [silences ... whispers] I liked to talk to people, have company with people, have fun ... to hang out ... read a book or a newspaper and discuss things ... I would like to talk to people! To discuss things and be alive!” (P2)*

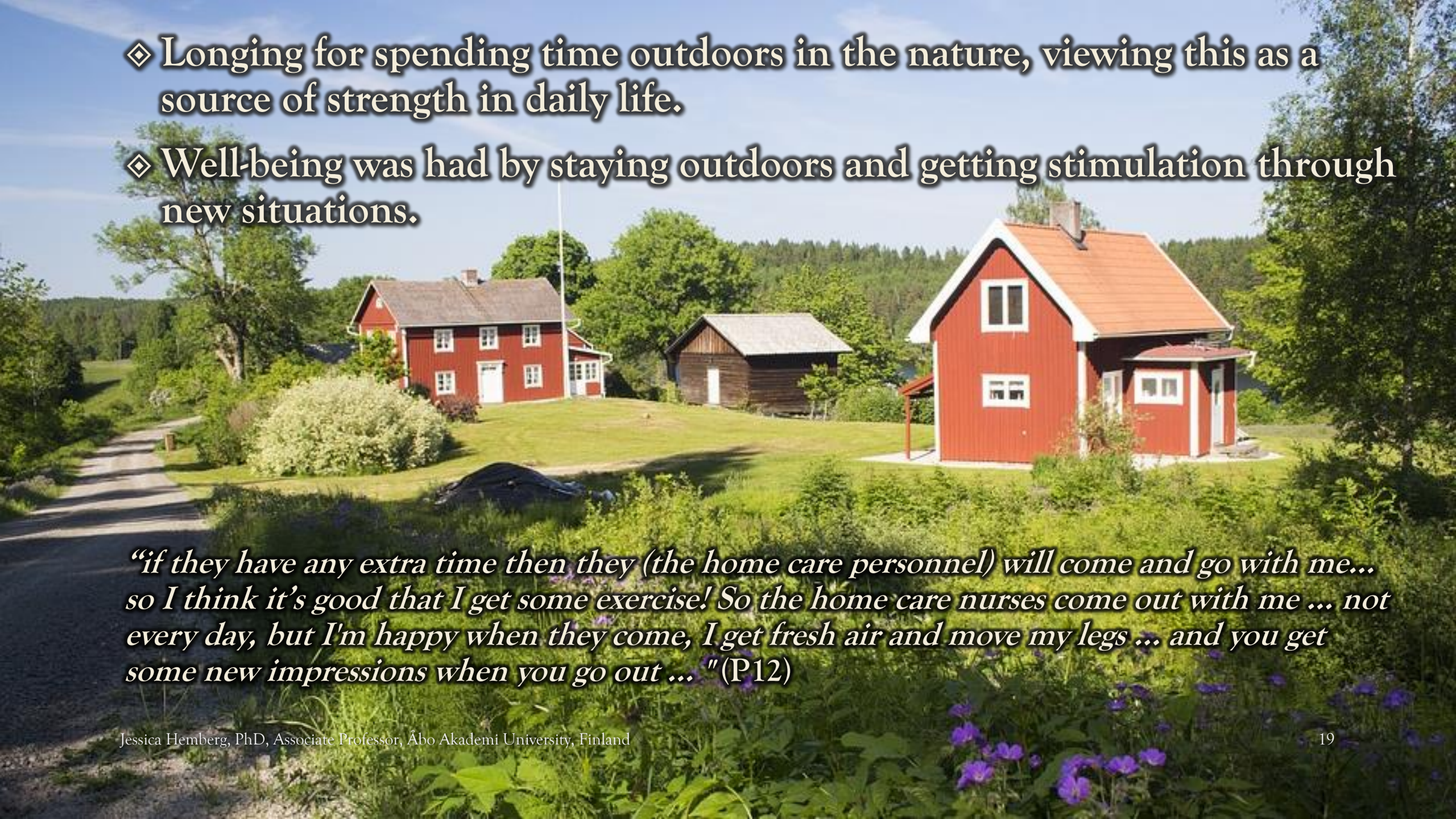


Theme nr 2: **Longing for nature**

They longed to spend time outdoors in the nature, viewing this as a source of strength. Well-being was had by staying outdoors and getting stimulation through new situations.

"...if they have any extra time then they (the home care personnel) will come and go with me... so I think it's good that I get some exercise! So the home care nurses come out with me ... not every day, but I'm happy when they come, I get fresh air and move my legs ... and you get some new impressions when you go out ... "



- 
- ◆ Longing for spending time outdoors in the nature, viewing this as a source of strength in daily life.
 - ◆ Well-being was had by staying outdoors and getting stimulation through new situations.

"if they have any extra time then they (the home care personnel) will come and go with me... so I think it's good that I get some exercise! So the home care nurses come out with me ... not every day, but I'm happy when they come, I get fresh air and move my legs ... and you get some new impressions when you go out ... "(P12)

Theme nr 2: Longing for nature

Nature → strength in everyday life.

“And so my birds, who fly here ... they like me ... and in the summer I like wild flowers ... and when we have been on a few trips, they usually look so strange to me, when I walk by myself by the side of the ditches and I’m interested in flowers” 2021-03-11

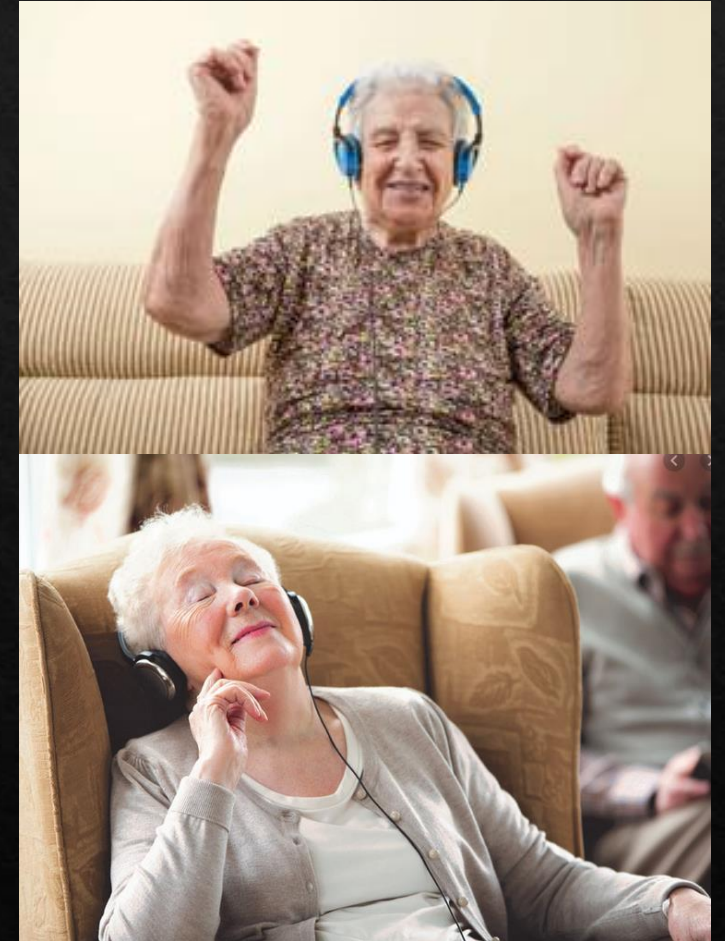
Longing for nature

- ◆ The elderly also testified that the fulfillment of the longing to go out to sea and visit the archipelago would have a positive impact on their well-being, as this is what some of them did earlier in life.



Theme nr 3: Longing for creativity, aesthetics and music

- ◆ They felt that **listening to music** was a way to renew their strength → their bodies liked the rhythms in the music → a sense of **community and security**.
- ◆ “... It was a long time and then I had the music. Oh, it was nice ... It just feels so wonderful inside ... I enjoy ... relax ... and of course ... there are some rhythms, then my body follows along ... so that’s fun ...” (P6)



Longing for creativity, aesthetics and music

One participant enjoyed dancing together with her husband (earlier), and that it now provided her with well-being also when she remembered those times.

"You know what, we went to the dance! ... We danced, the old man and I, and we went together... there were no special couples so, we went together and danced and had fun. ... But that was it... then. That was how it was then. " (P10)



Longing for creativity, aesthetics and music

- ❖ Succeeding in fulfilling their longing to solve **crossword puzzles, read newspapers or books** was another way in which well-being could be strengthened.
- ❖ Some did not have such a large social network or did not feel a need to be with people.
- ❖ *“But I am not really a sociable person so I might as well be alone. I like to read. ... It almost gives me more [enjoyment] if I have a good book or something interesting to read.” (P16)*



Longing for creativity, aesthetics and music

Those who were without their eyesight could not fulfill their longing to do things, e.g. handicrafts, which was something negative.

The longing to hand sew could be a suffering:

“when you also have something wrong with your eyes... which you cannot ... and then you lose the passion when you can’t see ...” (P8).



Dissussion

- ◇ **Longing for cognitive stimulants** → it is also **i m p o r t a n t t o stimulate the mental and cognitive abilities** of older adults, and **n o t j u s t t o c a r e f o r t h e i r b a s i c n e e d s .** → stimulating older adults with things that they themselves are interested in.
- ◇ *“Well, that's the thing to make sure ... or to think we're human. We don't have a head just to put a cap on, we have something underneath that needs to be engaged ... so, I think” (P2).*

Dissussion

- ◆ In this study it emerged that a longing that can be fulfilled was perceived as something positive, while **a longing that was desired but could not be fulfilled was negative and degrading.** → Longing can also be an obstacle (hinderance) if the frail older adults cannot adapt to the circumstances or the situation.
- ◆ Failty in several contexts limited or hindered their ability to fulfill their longing, e.g. to get involved in arts and crafts. → **The loss of health and functional limitations are clearly risk factors for a decline in well-being** (Smith et al., 2002; Hansen and Slagsvold 2012).

Dissussion

- ◇ Well-being could be achieved **by spending time with a similar age group**
- ◇ Positive and negative longings cannot be fully separated, and in this study it was seen that a longing can be both negative and positive at the same time.

Dissussion

- ◆ The **social longing is a profound and strong request** from the frail older adults and that this longing is so strongly rooted in the person. It was found (in this study) that it is more difficult to rebuild close relationships among frail older adults compared to re-building other longings.
- ◆ **Social longing and request for it strongly affected the participants, especially when this longing cannot be fulfilled.**
- ◆ **Challenging: longing for a support person in the home →**
However, resources for home care personnel have decreased between the years 2005-2015 according to Kröger et al. (2018).

Conclusion:

- ◆ This study provides **an understanding of the mechanisms of longing among frail older adults.**
- ◆ Longing is an inner resource for setting into motion the transition toward well-being.
- ◆ Future studies could focus on how frail older adults can be supported to combat the negative forms of longing in daily life.

Thank you!



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