

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Downsizing to Upgrade your Life

How the Use of Character Strengths in the Tiny House Lifestyle Increases the Subjective Well-Being



By Hannah Hanckmann • University of Twente, 21st of June 2019

Supervision:

Marileen Kouijzer, MSc.

Dr. Christina Bode

A thesis submitted as part of the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology

Positive Psychology and Technology

Faculty of Behavioral, Management and Social Sciences

Student number: s1865560

Abstract

Theoretical Framework. The number of people following the tiny house lifestyle is increasing immensely. Tiny house builders lessen their belongings and focus only on the essentials. Existing research explains that tiny house builders experience increased well-being through their lifestyle. Yet, no viable strategy for tiny house builders to enhance their subjective well-being currently exists. Since a strength-based approach in life generally enhances well-being, the aim of the current study is to explore whether tiny house builders' conscious identification and use of character strengths elevate their well-being.

Methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight tiny house builders and residents. Therefore, an interview scheme is developed that consists of forty open-ended questions aiming to figure out participants' perspective on their well-being, their character strength possession as well as their perception on what strengths are needed in their tiny house lifestyle. Also, participants needed to write a letter from the future, in which they discussed their desired future living situation in their tiny house, which strengths they use to become their desired future self and how they experience subjective-well-being in their imagined future. Data are deductively and inductively coded using the program *Atlas.ti*.

Results. The use of character strengths promoted subjective well-being during the construction and habitation in a tiny house. Specifically, the character strengths *bravery*, *citizenship*, *kindness*, *appreciation of beauty and excellence* as well as *humility and modesty* were beneficial to increase subjective well-being within the tiny house lifestyle. Tiny house builders and residents experienced subjective well-being by leading positive relationships with other people as well as experiencing personal growth and autonomy. Participants felt happy in leading their lifestyle because it enabled them to live sustainably.

Conclusion. The findings indicate that tiny house builders and residents well-being is enhanced by the conscious and active use of character strengths within their lifestyle. Importantly, the most frequently mentioned character strengths are strengths needed to build and/or live in the tiny house rather than strengths that increase subjective well-being. Nonetheless, the connection between the three concepts *tiny houses*, *character strengths* and *subjective well-being* is confirmed. Future research needs to focus on a specific implementation of how tiny house builders can most efficiently learn to identify and apply character strengths in their lifestyles.

Keywords. *Tiny house builders; Impact of Character Strengths; Well-being; Letter from the Future; Interview Study*

Introduction

In contemporary times, urbanization is a pervasive problem, which is defined as dense clustering of people in previously sparse populated areas (Simpson, 1999). In these areas, affordable housing is short in supply (Shearer & Burton, 2018). The price of a house has grown nine times since 1970. Yet, income has remained static and fixed (Boeckermann, Kaczynski & King, 2018). Consequently, only more affluent people can keep up with the rising prices of housing. Houses are unaffordable for the majority of society (Shearer & Burton, 2018). At the same time, population density, as well as housing sizes in affluent countries, have increased (Mutter, 2013). Reports from 1973 to 2013 have shown that housing size in the United States has expanded from 154 up to 241 square meters. Simultaneously, family size has decreased from three or four members to two or three members (Boeckermann et al., 2018). Up to now, people's private homes have never before been as spacious as today (Boeckermann et al., 2018). The housing situation worldwide is insecure because terrain and capital have become continually rare and limited. As a response to urbanization and a more sustainable way of living, the tiny house movement has emerged (Mutter, 2013).

The Tiny House Movement

Specific key features characterize the tiny house movement. A typical tiny house size ranges around six and thirty-seven square meters (Mutter, 2013). Every tiny house needs to include facilities for sleeping, bathing, storage and cooking (Boeckermann et al., 2018). It can be placed on wheels or be settled on solid ground (Shearer & Burton, 2018). Full mobile tiny houses are often not acknowledged as residences and tiny house builders must own a property on which a permanent tiny house can be built. Yet, many tiny house builders do not comply with these rules and place their tiny homes illegally in civic areas (Shearer & Burton, 2018). Another characteristic of tiny house residents is that they live by the 'Do-it-yourself' ideology (Shearer & Burton, 2018; Boeckermann et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it is affordability that motivates people to downsize and change their lifestyles. Affordability concerns the price of the tiny house itself as well as the reduced living costs that come along with this lifestyle (Shearer & Burton, 2018). Common prices of tiny houses average out at 20.000 dollars (Wyatt, 2016). Besides affordability, environmental values are key features in the tiny house lifestyle too. Tiny houses are constructed in a manner that saves energy and water (Shearer & Burton, 2018). Finally, living in a community is a defining feature of living in a tiny home. Tiny house residents often live in colonies and build social relationships amongst each other (Shearer & Burton, 2018).

The attraction towards tiny houses commenced in the United States in 1850 as a reaction against unreasonable consumption (Shearer & Burton, 2018). This means that people had issues with waste and excess. Tiny house advocates favored a simpler, independent and individualistic lifestyle (Shearer & Burton, 2018). Nowadays, the number of tiny house residents is growing substantially. Communities, such as the ‘Small House Society’, have established with over 1800 tiny house builders as group members (Mutter, 2013). Particularly, young adults, students, retirees, seniors and people with a general interest in tiny house communities are inclined to join the tiny house movement (Mutter, 2013). The phenomenon ‘tiny house’ has soon become a movement through the fast-growing interest of people associating themselves with the tiny house lifestyle (Shearer & Burton, 2018).

In addition, the tiny house movement has adopted characteristics (i.e. downsizing) as well as values (i.e. modesty) from different lifestyles (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). Amongst these lifestyles, the most popular are minimalism and voluntary simplicity. From both lifestyles stems the idea of living a more fulfilling life by decreasing unnecessary consumption of materialism and instead focusing only on important elements of life. The underlying idea is to find ‘true’ well-being in the liberation from the constraints of ordinary life (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). Generally, the tiny house movement supports the notion that smaller houses are economical, appealing and thus worthwhile (Shearer & Burton, 2018). In doing so, the tiny house lifestyle offers a useful path towards increased well-being, which is a form of happiness (Mangold & Zschau, 2019).

The Concept of Well-being in Everyday Life

Before explaining how well-being relates to tiny houses, the concept itself must be clarified. Over time, people’s well-being has become an essential and deeply anchored concept in modern psychology (Seligman, 2005). Well-being is defined as an individual’s cognitive judgment and emotional evaluation of his/her personal satisfaction and gratification in life (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2005). It can be considered subjectively and personally. In particular, subjective well-being entails frequent positive experiences, high satisfaction with life and relatively rarely occurring negative emotions (Diener et al., 2005).

To further conceptualize well-being, it consists of six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growths (Ryff & Singer, 2005). Self-acceptance involves perceiving the self as favorable. Thereby, the individual must accept positive as well as negative parts of himself/herself. Positive relations with others include meaningful and satisfying relationships with different

people. Autonomy concerns taking control over one's life by resisting social pressures. In doing so, autonomous people feel free and independent (Ryff & Singer, 2005). Environmental mastery, in contrast, compromises the ability to manage and to create environments suitable to personal needs and values. Still, environmental mastery is not equated with the protection of the environment. Purpose in life means that individuals have goals they pursue to find meaning. Finally, personal growth contains a continual development of the self that is open-minded towards new experiences and self-knowledge. The individual strives to reach his/her potential. If an individual achieves to experience all of these different dimensions positively, he or she feels well (Ryff & Singer, 2005).

However, the citizens' well-being does not increase, at least not comprehensively and individually (Horowitz, 2018). As a result of increasing materialism and a growing social division, many people compare their life situation with that of others. Subsequently, a growing number of people are trying to escape materialism and the corresponding inequalities to find meaning in life (Horowitz, 2018). These people are actively seeking alternative ways of living. The tiny house lifestyle is one of these alternatives (Mangold & Zschau, 2019).

Tiny House Builders Road to Well-Being.

Improving mental health is one of the main reasons why people are following the tiny house lifestyle (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). Tiny house advocates believe that genuine well-being comes from within the individual (Millburn & Nicodemus, 2015). They suppose that an abundance of material belongings causes suffering (Shearer & Burton, 2018). Mangold and Zschau (2019, p. 11) have illustrated this by interviewing a tiny house resident: *"If I'm not [...] having a whole bunch of stuff to maintain then I'm free to just live."* Thus, tiny house builders seek well-being by lessening their belongings and consciously living a simple life.

On the path to well-being tiny house builders feel secure, gain control over their lives, experience deep connections, master the simplicity of life and collect new experiences (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). These aspects of the tiny house lifestyle respond to the six dimensions of well-being. As a result of prior strains and existential crises, tiny house builders are striving to change their basic situation. They re-examine their lives, accept their past and seek alternatives (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). From this process, the tiny house lifestyle emerges. Tiny house builders try to regain control over their lives by being self-determined and autonomous to live freely (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). They lead positive relationships with others by building deep and meaningful connections within their tiny house

community (Shearer & Burton, 2018). Tiny house builders achieve well-being by building their own house that suits their personal needs and values. In doing so, they master their environment (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). This way, tiny house builders find purpose in life by fulfilling their goal to live a simple life that embraces only important features such as making everything count or finding one's true self (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). Finally, tiny house builders grow personally because they are open-minded towards new experiences (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). As a result, their well-being is enhanced.

To sum it up, the tiny house lifestyle is one path to achieve well-being if one advocates the values and goals that are implied in this way of living. Given that the subjectivity of well-being acknowledges the individual's beliefs and feelings (Diener et al., 2005) it is informative to study tiny house builders' subjective well-being. The expertise of tiny house builders will thus be valued. Subsequently, the current study distinguishes itself from existing studies by evaluating the subjectivity of well-being rather than generalized statements with regard to assumed well-being. As a result, scientific literature on well-being and the tiny house lifestyle will expand because various people experience gratification in life differently (Diener et al., 2005). Even though researchers are certain that tiny house builders and/or residents *can* elevate their well-being, by means of the tiny house lifestyle (Mangold & Zschau, 2019), they miss asking *how* this can be achieved in the process of building and/or living in a tiny house. Against this background, it is necessary to examine strategies that can be used by tiny house builders to increase their well-being by means of their tiny homes.

Strength-based Approach

One prominent strategy to increase individuals' subjective well-being is to use character strengths. Well-being is high when people engage in pleasing activities that correspond to their character strengths (Diener et al., 2005). The tiny house lifestyle is a pleasing activity for tiny house builders and/or residents (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). In order to increase their well-being within this pleasing activity, their character strengths must be explored. Hence, the strength approach complements the study of tiny houses well, as these character strengths are not scientifically investigated until now.

The importance of strengths has grown since the birth of positive psychology (Wright & Lopez, 2005). Positive psychology tries to identify, as well as to develop, individuals' most positive and virtuous characteristics. Because using strengths leads to higher well-being rather than simply possessing strengths (Wood, Linely, Maltby, Kashdan & Hurling, 2011), psychologists attempt to increase the individuals' well-being by helping them to act out their

positive qualities (Seligman, 2005). Using one's positive qualities to act virtuously leads to well-being. On these grounds, "happiness is the aim of life, but virtue is the foundation of happiness" (Park & Peterson, 2009, p. 8). These positive qualities or virtues are commonly referred to as character strengths (Horowitz, 2018). Seligman and Peterson explained these character strengths further by developing a classification (VIA-CS) of six virtues and twenty-four character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Character strengths are 'trait-like' in that they are stable across various times and situations (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). They also vary across individuals. In other words, a certain strength is strongly pronounced in one individual but less pronounced in another (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004).

In this context, research has confirmed that employing character strengths leads to higher well-being if personal goals are pursued (Linley et al., 2010). Concluding, it is important that tiny house builders actively use their character strengths in the process of realizing their tiny home in order to increase their subjective well-being. Another perspective on human strengths has acknowledged that character strengths enhance the ability to transform mental images into reality. Specifically, strengths are used to alter the external world into a desired form (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Tiny house builders would use their character strengths to increase their well-being by creating a surrounding and thus changing the external world in a way that matches their needs and values (Ryff & Singer, 2005).

The current study

The current study will enrich research on the tiny house lifestyle because only a limited amount of scientific investigations in this context exists. It is unclear which specific character strengths are needed to increase tiny house builders' and residents' subjective well-being. Therefore, it is important to explore the relation between all three concepts for two reasons. First, the positive psychology movement is relatively contemporary compared to classic psychology. Because classical psychology has used to focus on the negative and dysfunctional aspects of life, researchers need to scientifically investigate humans' positive qualities and their optimum functioning (Wood et. al., 2011). Every novel study in the field of positive psychology enriches knowledge and is thus relevant. After all, character strengths and subjective well-being are essential topics of positive psychology and this field of study needs to expand due to its scientific novelty (Wood et. al., 2011).

Second, the current study tries to enrich research through the exploration of an understudied target group, i.e. tiny house builders/residents. In this context, it is relevant to fill the gap of knowledge on tiny house builders' well-being because every member of society

should experience mental health and it is necessary to improve well-being in every area of life. Hence, scientific research should not neglect marginal groups. This study is important, as it seeks to understand and to improve tiny house builders' well-being using a strength-based approach. Addressing these gaps in knowledge, this study aims to answer the following research questions: *How does the use of character strengths in the process of building and/or living in a tiny house influence tiny house builders' and residents' subjective well-being?*

Methods

Design

The aim of this study was to explore the importance of using character strengths in leading the tiny house lifestyle in order to elevate subjective well-being. Therefore, a qualitative explorative method was employed. Mixed methods were used which took form in semi-structured face-to-face interviews and written letters from the future.

It was important for this study to identify tiny house builders' and tiny house residents' experiences, emotions and thoughts. Generally, interview studies have enabled researchers to gain profound knowledge about people's experiences and feelings (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Moreover, it was crucial for the study to identify tiny house builders' future thoughts by making use of the method 'Letter from the Future'. By using this method participants needed to imagine their desired future. This helped researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' values and future aims (Sools & Mooren, 2012).

Participants

The study was conducted with eight participants. The recruitment of participants was carried out by means of purposive sampling to ensure relevant and informative data gathering of specific cases. In particular, a homogenous purposive sample was drawn from the population. Two inclusion criteria existed. All participants had to be tiny house builders and/or tiny house residents. Besides, participants needed to speak either German or English fluently.

The participants were contacted using the Internet. The researcher joined a group named 'Tiny House Deutschland' on Facebook. A recruitment message was posted into that group (Appendix A). Thereupon, two participants reacted and showed interest in the research. Then, personal meetings to conduct the interview were arranged via Facebook or Telephone. The first participant connected the researcher with three other tiny house builders. Similarly, the next two participants conveyed the researcher to three additional participants. As it turned out, only a few individuals were interested in participating in the study. Reasons for

indifference were time restrictions, no interest or the feeling of being offended. In certain cases, participants felt attacked because they believed the reasons for living in a tiny house were obvious and did not understand being a subject of investigation.

Five participants of this study were male and three female. They were between 24 and 70 years of age, with a mean age of 38 (SD=15.47). Notably, five of the participants lived and built their tiny houses at the same location. They planned to live together in a community. In contrast, three participants decided to live in solitude. Also, five participants were in the process of building their tiny homes, while three participants were tiny house residents. Participants' demographics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics including Age, Gender, Nationality and Status of Tiny House

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Tiny House Builder or Resident
Participant 1	40	Male	German	Tiny House Builder but lives in his unfinished house
Participant 2	70	Male	German	Tiny House Builder
Participant 3	24	Male	German	Tiny House Builder
Participant 4	34	Female	German	Tiny House Resident
Participant 5	26	Female	German	Tiny House Resident
Participant 6	37	Male	Kyrgyzstan with German Citizenship	Tiny House Builder
Participant 7	25	Female	German	Tiny House Builder
Participant 8	49	Male	German	Tiny House Resident but builds a new tiny house

Materials

The materials needed to implement the current study involved an interview scheme and instructions for the letter from the future. The indicated materials have been created in cooperation with an additional researcher, aiming to figure out the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of tiny house builders. Subsequently, questions concerning these topics were asked but not further analyzed. An expert checked both guidelines. As a matter of mutual understanding, the guidelines for this study were translated. Since the researchers' mother

tongue was German and both were fluent in English it was possible to establish an accurate translation. In addition, an audio recorder was used to document the interviews.

Interview Scheme.

In the first place, an interview scheme was developed. The scheme consisted of forty questions, including main and sub-questions. These were divided into six categories. All questions were open-ended in order to encourage participants to share their opinion honestly as well as to ensure full exploration of the participants' viewpoint. The first category consisted of thirteen general questions. These questions were tailored at participants' demographics, their life situations, the individual design of their tiny homes, as well as their general motivations and interests in the tiny house lifestyle. The second category included five questions, which were aimed to figure out tiny house builders' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation for following the tiny house lifestyle. The third category entailed three questions. These questions aimed to figure out what caused tiny house builders' decision to move into a tiny house. Moreover, the fourth category involved eight questions on well-being. Thereby, the six dimensions of well-being (cf. p. 4-5 'Well-Being') were emphasized. Then, five strengths-related questions were posed. These questions aimed to identify whether participants perceive character strengths as important as well as which character strengths they used and needed. Finally, three questions were directed towards the relation between well-being and strengths. In addition to theoretical questions, three probing questions were included in the interview scheme. Further explanation or examples were asked in case a participant's statement was unclear. The full interview scheme can be found in Appendix B.

Notably, all participants received the *Values in Action Classification System* (VIA-CS) developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as the foundation for answering the strengths questions (Appendix C). On these grounds, all participants had the same background knowledge about character strengths and results would be comparable. The VIA-CS consists of six core virtues, which are associated with 24 character strengths. This classification is not only the most popular strength theory (Magyar-Moe, 2009), but it is also globally recognized as valid for all cultures and nationalities (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Letter from the Future.

Moreover, instructions about how to write a letter from the future were created (Appendix D). These instructions clarified that participants should imagine writing a letter from the future to the present. Participants could address the letter to whomever they wanted

to, including themselves, a family member or a close friend. They needed to specify where and when they would be in their imagined future as well as what would happen and how they would become the person they are describing. Participants were asked to consider the motivations and obstacles they experienced by realizing their desired future. Also, they were asked to mention which character strengths helped them to achieve their wishes and aspirations. Essentially, they needed to refer to their tiny house. Therefore, participants were asked to illustrate what might have changed since the present.

Procedure

The BMS Ethical Committee of the University of Twente approved the current study. The file number of this approval was 190342. After gaining ethical permission for the study, recruitment of participants and data collection began. The whole process of gathering data took place from the 25th of March until the 3rd of May. To begin with the study, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix E) to ensure confidentiality. In doing so, they were informed about their privacy rights and their data handling during the research. All personal data was anonymized and participants could opt-out of the study at any time without having to name a reason. In the end, they received a copy of their written consent.

The specific interviews took place on the 13th, 14th and 16th of April. At the start, researchers and the participants introduced themselves, clarified their mutual expectations and discussed in which language the interviews should take place. Then, the actual interview of approximately 60 minutes began. The interviews were conducted face-to-face. The five participants planning to live in a community were interviewed as a group. Six interviews took place in a quiet room, and two interviews were conducted at a convention in a tiny house where they were at times disrupted by noise. During the interviews, all findings were documented by means of audio recordings. At the end of the interviews, participants had the possibility to ask questions. Then, the participants were provided with the instructions for the method 'Letter from the Future'. Thereby, they had the opportunity to ask further questions. The researcher and interviewee then agreed on a deadline for the reception of the letter from the future via e-mail. The study ended by thanking participants for their time and honesty. On the 3rd of May, all participants had sent the letters, and data collection thus ended.

Analysis

First, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Names, dates and locations were deleted to ensure anonymity. These transcriptions and the stories tiny house builders shared by writing

the letters from the future were examined. All collected data were transferred into a program called *Atlas.ti* version 8.4.15.

Based on the mixed methods design, a coding scheme was established. Matching topics emerged because the questions of the interview and the instructions of the letter asked for similar content. Therefore, the researchers decided not to make a distinction between both sources. Analysis involved devising deductive codes on the basis of the six dimensions of subjective well-being and the VIA-CS (Ryff & Singer, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).. To cover all meaningful utterances of the participants an inductive approach complemented the analysis. The emerging codes were defined based on the participants' own words mentioned in the letters and the interviews. The resulting coding scheme was discussed with an expert and revised by the researcher. Agreement was reached when all codes covered relevant statements useful to answer the research question.

To lay the foundation for answering the research question, two main codes were created: (1) personal character strengths of tiny house builders/residents and (2) character strengths needed to lead the tiny house lifestyle. The researcher could then analyze the frequency with which participants mentioned an aspect. Based on the frequency the researcher could determine the meaningfulness of a code. In doing so, the data was transferred into *SPSS* version 25.0 to display the results graphically (Appendix F). Three main codes were developed additionally with a view to answering the research question: (3) positive effect of tiny house lifestyle on subjective well-being, (4) positive effect of specific character strengths on subjective well-being in the tiny house lifestyle, and (5) the relation between subjective well-being, character strengths and the tiny house lifestyle. The difference between the main codes aiming to lay the groundwork and to answer the research question is their use within the current study. The former prepared the researcher to analyze the data by providing him/her with an overview of all character strengths that were generally important within the tiny house lifestyle. In opposition, the latter main codes enabled the researcher to actually analyze the most important character strengths needed to increase subjective well-being. Generally, five main codes were developed and thirty-six sub codes. The coded quotes were assembled in a table (Appendix G). All data were coded until no new topics emerged and codes for every meaningful quote existed.

Results

In this section, the results from the analysis of the interviews and the letters are presented in order to answer the research question: *How does the use of character strengths in the process*

of building and/ or living in a tiny house influence tiny house builders' and residents' subjective well-being? All definitions of codes were adapted to the six dimensions of well-being by Ryff and Singer (2005) as well as the VIA-CS by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Even though 13 components of subjective well-being and 22 character strengths were discovered, only findings relevant to answer the research question are presented. Hence, only the findings of the third, fourth and fifth main codes are given. *Freq.* indicates the frequency in which a specific code was mentioned. All findings can be found in the coding scheme (Appendix G).

Positive Effect of Tiny House Lifestyle on Subjective Well-Being.

The third main code described the effect of the tiny house lifestyle on subjective well-being. In this study, subjective well-being was defined as participants' positive experiences and feelings within their tiny houses. The tiny house lifestyle had an effect on all identified aspects of well-being. The most important results are presented. First, experiencing 'positive relations with others' had a positive impact on participants' well being (*Freq.*=19). This sub code was defined as tiny house builders'/residents' satisfaction within their social environment. All participants mentioned that they experienced positive relations, essentially to their tiny house community: *"I am more in contact with people that have a similar mindset [...]. And this is part of my well-being. So, not to be every time the freak [...]."* (P1, male, 40).

The next sub code was 'personal growth' (*Freq.*=19). This code was defined as the continual improvement of the self within the tiny house lifestyle. Personal growth was strongly influenced by participants' lifestyle. According to all participants it contributed to subjective well-being for two reasons. First, novel experiences fostering personal growth were worthwhile: *"The experience that I find in new areas [such as the tiny house] is simply valuable. So, I have zero concerns that this is going to be awkward afterward."* (P2, male, 70). Second, subjective well-being was enhanced because the experience of building a tiny house was encouraging: *"The tiny house project reinforces oneself extremely. So you're testing your own limits a bit [...] by actually growing steadily or even being thrown back."* (P4, female, 34).

Besides, all participants experienced 'autonomy' (*Freq.*=17) in leading their tiny house lifestyle. The sub code autonomy was defined as being able to make self-determined decisions and living the tiny house lifestyle independent from social pressures. The tiny house lifestyle enhanced autonomy by providing tiny house builders and residents with more independence and freedom: *"This house allows me [...] to spend my time only with doing*

things that I enjoy.” (P7, female, 25). Consequently, tiny house builders’ and residents’ experience increased their well-being, as they could only focus on what was important for their happiness. Also, they experienced being free from commitments compared to their living situation in an apartment or a house: *“It definitely influenced my well-being because I just became happier. That is caused by the fact that I do no longer have to fulfill so many obligations. For instance, I do not host family parties anymore.”* (P8, male, 49).

Additionally, the sub code ‘nature and sustainability’ was a factor that positively influenced participants’ well-being (*Freq.*=6). Most participants felt well by supporting the environment, respecting nature and producing minimal waste: *“Now I live in a house where every detail has a valid reason. From the optics and my personal needs to the needs of all people on this earth: It consists of natural building materials.”* (P7, female, 25). So far, tiny house builders articulated that they value to live in harmony with nature and that their well-being was increased. This can be illustrated with an extract from the interviews: *“Nature - that's important to me personally! [...]”* (P8, male, 49). *So nature is definitely something that has increased your well-being within this lifestyle?* (R1, female, 21). *“Exactly! I also have moorhens, so I live with nature. I'm always outside [...] so, for me that's great!”* (P8, male, 49). Finally, another sub code was happiness (*Freq.*=8). Most participants mentioned that their happiness increased extensively since they started to build tiny houses: *“All the experience that I am collecting here [in the tiny house] and that I can share this experience with other people makes me happy.”* (P7, female, 25).

Positive Effect of Specific Character Strengths on Subjective Well-Being in the Tiny House Lifestyle.

The fourth main code implied specific character strengths, which increased the participants’ subjective well-being. Four sub codes referring to five specific character strengths had been developed in this context. Participants not necessarily mentioned all of these character strengths most often but needed these strengths to increase their subjective well-being. Yet, two character strengths were most frequently mentioned and increased subjective well-being. Within this study, character strengths were defined as positive traits that enable tiny house builders to increase their well-being.

First and foremost, participants mentioned most frequently ‘bravery’ as necessary to lead the tiny house lifestyle (*Freq.*=17). This sub code implied that participants were fearless regarding changing their lives completely by moving into a tiny house. In particular, tiny house builders and residents needed to be brave enough to resist social pressures: *To live [...]*

in the tiny house has something to do with courage. So, I do not indulge in social pressure and do what is expected. ” (P8, male, 49). Also, participants emphasized they needed to be brave in order to continue the tiny house lifestyle: “So in any case, you need courage to continue to live [life in the tiny house] because [...] there can always be such obstacles as, for example, that the building office comes here or that something changes socially.” (P8, male, 49). ‘Bravery’ had a positive effect on well-being. Participants felt strong, powerful and content when they grew beyond their limitations: “You mastered something that worried you a lot. That’s how you became [...] someone who developed [...] further and became more mature than before. (P4, female, 34).

The character strength ‘citizenship’ was the second most frequently noted strength (*Freq.*=15). This sub code was defined as tiny house builders’ ability to support their community by being loyal and reliable. Participants perceived citizenship as an essential strength for living in a tiny house community, as it would be important to help each other: “*I feel like we all support each other quite well here in our community, which is necessary. [...] We can work together as a team.*” (P6, male, 37). Importantly, the character strength ‘citizenship’ only increased well-being in combination with ‘kindness’ (*Freq.*=8). Therefore, both character strengths were summarized in one sub code. Hereby, kindness was defined as being generous, compassionate and nice. Within this study, tiny house builders possessing this strength would help each other. In particular, participants felt primarily content when they could be generous and provided support to and within the community: “*I have always felt particularly comfortable, especially when I have somehow helped in the community with my strengths. That’s a really nice feeling.*” (P7, female, 25). However, one participant mentioned, “*I’m more of a loner. For example, at Tiny House Construction, many people have offered to help me, but I prefer to do it all by myself.*” (P8, male, 49). Hence, ‘citizenship’ and ‘kindness’ had an interrelated effect on well-being in a tiny house community. Tiny house builders and/or residents living in solitude did not perceive this strength as important.

The third sub code was ‘appreciation of beauty and excellence’ (*Freq.*=9). It was defined as tiny house builders’ and residents’ skill to enjoy and value the physical attractiveness of objects within their everyday life. This character strength affected participants’ well-being by providing them comfort in their tiny houses. As a result, they felt well: “*I’ve always been the practical guy who thought: the main thing is it works, but with your sense of beauty, you’ve created a [tiny] house in which I feel super comfortable and well.*” (P3, male, 24). Finally, the character strength ‘humility/ modesty’ had an effect on participants’ well-being (*Freq.*=7). This sub code implied that tiny house builders and/or

residents do not value materialism but are happy with simplicity. By downsizing, participants emphasized that they only concentrated on the meaningful aspects of life: *"I have limited myself to the essentials. [...] I do not have to care for more rooms and things than I really need. That makes me feel relieved."* (P7, female, 25).

The Relation between Subjective Well-Being, Character Strengths and Tiny House Lifestyle.

Finally, the fifth main code described the relationship between subjective well-being, character strengths and the tiny house lifestyle. Generally, the use of character strengths in the tiny house lifestyle had a positive effect on tiny house builders' and residents' subjective well-being. All participants believed that the use of strengths influenced their subjective well-being: *"In any case, strengths and well-being are related because you're happy when you know you can do something."* (P4, female, 34). Also, participants noted that all three concepts are connected: *"Yes, that is somehow related - strengths, well-being and tiny houses. What you do well is fun and then you do it out of motivation and then things arise."* (P7, female, 25). However, participants differed in their perception on the usefulness of character strengths for the tiny house lifestyle.

Beginning with an extreme position, one participant reported, *"I believe without possessing strengths, you can directly stop [to build a tiny house]"* (P4, female, 34). However, most participants agreed that the context of tiny houses provided them with an opportunity to apply and develop their strengths: *"I think the context of tiny houses provides you with space to apply your strengths and, above all, to develop your strengths because you can just try yourself out."* (P5, female, 26). Also, the majority of participants shared the opinion that the possession and appliance of character strengths simply made it possible to build and live in the tiny house *"Yes I think, my strengths have made the whole [tiny house lifestyle] possible. [...] Otherwise, I would not have done it. So, of course, that has influenced me [...] positively."* (P8, male, 49). In addition, one participant generally explained that one's well-being depends on the particular strengths one possesses: *"I think it also depends on what your strengths are. [...] So if you possess positive strengths, I think you can always increase your well-being by the usage of strengths."* (P1, male, 40).

Only a small minority of participants underlined the disadvantages of focusing on strengths: *"Well, let's say, we all have strengths. You just do not know that and that's the problem. That's why many people feel bad even though every person has his qualities. So, I do not want to focus on these strengths because it puts many people under pressure. Do you need*

strengths? Yeah, we need something that drives us. But even weakness can drive us.” (P8, male, 49). Also, some participants mentioned that many character strengths were learned or became conscious only during the process of building a tiny house. Consequently, participants also emphasized, *“the strength to learn necessary strengths.”* (P5, female, 26). Finally, participants mentioned that they would use their character strengths to *“live life to the fullest.”* (P1, male, 40). In this context, one participant explained that he did not increase his well-being by means of his strengths but rather secured it: *“The use of strengths ensures my well-being. Increasing is always a form of saying bigger, faster, better under which we also suffer in part, but I think securing is a fitting word.”* (P2, male, 70).

The overall effect of character strengths in the tiny house lifestyle on subjective well-being was positive: *“If you experience pleasure because you realize you are able to do something, I think it elevates your well-being automatically.”* (P3, male, 24). Only one participant mentioned a negative effect: *“I think due to the use of my strengths I also experience difficulties.”* (P1, male 40.) However, the reasons for these difficulties were not named. Participants generally believed that their strengths enabled them to create a tiny house. As a result, their well-being was elevated because they realized that they were able to do something that they did not expect: *“This satisfaction from creating your own house is a completely different quality - in a positive sense. And I think my strengths did enable me to create this tiny house and as a result, my well-being is elevated as I experienced a lot of satisfaction in the building process.”* (P8, male, 49). Finally, one participant mentioned that the tiny house lifestyle would generally increase health, as it fosters interpersonal relationships with similarly minded individuals but also provides the opportunity to promote individuality: *“This Tiny House movement is quite health promoting [...]. You just feel a bond with each other that is not as tight as in groups that say ‘if you are not the same “thinker” as we are, you will not get in this group’. Instead, individuality is more in demand. And I see this Tiny House thing as something that - in addition to the fact that it also reduces housing shortages and costs - it is good for health.”* (P2, male, 70).

Discussion

The current study aims to identify how the use of character strengths in the process of building and/or living in a tiny house influences tiny house builders’ and/or residents’ subjective well-being. After reviewing the results, the research question can be answered. Generally, the subjective well-being of tiny house builders is enhanced by using their character strengths within the tiny house lifestyle. Tiny house builders and/or residents feel

well by leading positive relationships with others as well as by experiencing personal growth and autonomy. Tiny house builders and residents feel happy, especially because the tiny house lifestyle enables them to live in harmony with nature and to produce minimal waste. Besides, the character strengths of bravery, citizenship, kindness, appreciation of beauty and excellence as well as humility/modesty positively influence tiny house builders'/residents' subjective well-being. The indicated positive effect implies that all three concepts, i.e. subjective well-being, character strengths and the tiny house lifestyle, are connected. On the one hand, the tiny house lifestyle provides an opportunity to increase subjective well-being and to use character strengths. On the other hand, character strengths constitute the foundation to increase subjective well-being within the tiny house lifestyle. After all, the use of character strengths within the tiny house lifestyle is a viable strategy to promote subjective well-being.

Interpretation of Findings

The following observations aim at explaining results and connecting them to the existing theory with a view to ensure credibility and plausibility of the findings. They do so on the basis of recent knowledge to date. Prior studies only associated the six dimensions of well-being with the tiny house lifestyle. Notably, participants of the current study mention these aspects most often as well. However, two additional aspects of subjective well-being are assessed as meaningful in the tiny house lifestyle: nature/sustainability and happiness. Happiness is a component of positive emotion, which in turn is an element of well-being (Seligman, 2011). The terms happiness and subjective well-being are often used as synonyms (Proctor, Maltby, & Linley, 2010). It follows logically that participants attribute happiness as an aspect of subjective well-being. In addition, a sustainable lifestyle and environmental values are key features in leading the tiny house lifestyle (Shearer & Burton, 2018). Hence, it is not surprising that tiny house builders' and/or residents' well-being increase by living in harmony with nature and producing minimal waste. This finding is important, as it distinguishes environmental values from environmental mastery, which is one of the six dimensions of well-being. Tiny house builders and residents value nature and a sustainable lifestyle but do not want to interfere with the environment by changing it in a manner it matches their needs.

Remarkably, an unexpected result emerges. In particular, the most frequently mentioned character strengths are strengths needed to build and/or live in the tiny house rather than strengths that increase subjective well-being. In particular, only five out of twenty-two character strengths are reported to increase subjective well-being in the tiny house lifestyle.

Participants also most frequently mention two of these character strengths, namely 'bravery' and 'citizenship'. This might be a result of the majority of participants being tiny house builders rather than residents. Tiny house builders work towards finishing their houses, while tiny house residents can already focus on how to enjoy their lives in their tiny homes at best. The primary goal of the majority of participants is to finish the construction process of their tiny houses. Therefore, participants might use their strengths only to build a tiny house instead of to increase their well-being. However, an indirect and unconscious effect of increased well-being can be assumed because well-being automatically increases when strengths are cultivated in the process of achieving goals (Linley et al., 2010). In addition, tiny house builders are still in the planning phase when building their tiny houses. Thus, they are in the process of transforming their mental images into reality. This transformation increases well-being as well (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Hence, most participants might not consciously realize that their use of specific character strengths might have enhanced their well-being.

Another meaningful finding concerns the distinction between strengths needed for living in a tiny house community and strengths needed to live in solitude. For instance, citizenship is a character strength needed to live in a community but not for living in solitude. This finding can be explained by Seligman (2002), who suggests that genuine well-being is experienced when strengths are used in a manner that benefits the community. In other words, tiny house builders and residents feel well because they extend their character strengths outside themselves (Seligman, 2002). Tiny house builders and residents living in solitude do not have a tiny house community in which they could help. Hence, this strength is only important in a social context. This distinction is important for research on tiny houses, as findings suggest that tiny house builders and residents living in a community or in solitude have differing values. Thus, attention is called to this specific gap in existing literature. In sum, the relationship between all three concepts is discovered. This finding is relevant because it fills the gap of knowledge with scientific discoveries. In particular, cultivating bravery, citizenship, kindness, appreciation of beauty and excellence as well as humility and modesty increases tiny house builders and residents subjective well-being.

Strength and Limitations

To begin with, a major strength of this study is its design. Essentially, qualitative studies are the superior choice when exploring the meaning of human phenomena (Lyons, 2014), such as well-being and character strengths. Qualitative methods provide researchers with access to peoples' subjective experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). Since it would have been impossible to

explore participants' experiences without considering the subjectivity of their immediate and affective state of mind, the choice of using mixed methods has amounted to a strength as well. Interviews have enabled participants to voice their experiences (Seligman, 2005), while analyzing future thought has been an efficient tool to gain a clear picture of tiny house builders' and residents' current life situation. After all, the imagination of the future matters for current action (Sools & Mooren, 2012).

Importantly, the study of the tiny house lifestyle is a new scientific field of research and has been rarely studied before. The present study thus achieves to develop new knowledge that can be integrated into the scientific literature on tiny house builders. Connecting the research topic 'tiny house builders' to positive psychology fills an important gap in the literature. The groundwork for the analysis has relevant implications too, as it offers insight into personal character strengths that are needed for the tiny house lifestyle (Appendix F). It may furthermore be stated that the strengths of the current study are its reliability and its validity. Essentially, research methods used in this study are clearly outlined and explained in a manner that the study is replicable (Forshaw, 2013). However, the choice of measurement tools might have affected the validity, as the researcher could have been biased and the meaning of personal documents requires interpretation (Groth-Marnat & Wright, 2016; Lyons, 2014). In particular, the researcher needed to rely on his/her personal judgment when coding the interviews and letters. Still, the validity of interview studies is strengthened if they are conducted in a structured manner (Groth-Marnat & Wright, 2016). Because the interview study in the current research is semi-structured, validity is assumed to be reasonably high. Also, the semi-structure of the interviews enables researchers to be flexible, which is a major asset (Groth-Marnat & Wright, 2016) of the current study.

Still, several limitations exist. Participants have asked that some of the information they shared should not be published within the report. As a result, a few participants did not answer certain questions and thus important insights were not shared. For instance, one participant mentioned that the use of strengths negatively affected his well-being without wanting to explain that further. Even if participants communicated such insights, these could not be processed as data due to their private nature. In such a manner, the current study complied with the ethical guidelines and respected the participants' concerns, which is a strength of this study but, of course, at the same time constraints its findings. A second limitation relates to the recruitment of participants. Participants were recruited through personal contacts, as tiny house builders relate among each other. Several participants shared similar experiences and values. Consequently, the diversity of participants and thus the

variation of data might have been impeded. A solution would be to recruit participants independently of each other. As a result, the sample of the targeted population would be more heterogeneous. Still, it was achieved that the participants' age range is widely divergent.

Finally, a third limitation of the current study refers to the use of one focus group interview. As a result of interviewing five tiny house builders and/or residents as a group, no individual but rather interdependent views could be gained (Fern, 2001). Since living in a community is a defining characteristic of the tiny house lifestyle and tiny house builders are often not included into the society at large (Shearer & Burton, 2018), it was crucial to gather information on how a group of tiny house builders and residents' perceives their social situation. Moreover, the present study also made use of single interviews. Hence, strengths and limitations of single as well as group interviews were balanced and both approaches could complement each other to attain proper results.

Practical Recommendations and Implications for Future Research

Throughout the present study, recommendations arise with respect to the practical and theoretical implications of the findings. First of all, the present study should be replicated using a quantitative study design to verify whether the findings are valid for a larger number of tiny house builders and residents too. Also, each tiny house builder and/or resident might be advised to figure out which character strengths he or she possesses because the conscious use of one's most developed character strengths predicts most significant increases in well-being (Quinlan, Swain, & Vella-Brodrick, 2011). Since knowledge and use of one's character strengths are generally valuable and helpful to increase well-being as well as to pursue goals (Linley et al., 2010) it is recommended to apply one's character strengths in several situations, including the tiny house lifestyle. In this context, the current study bears not only implications for tiny house builders but also society at large, as the findings emphasize the general appliance of character strengths in life.

However, a concrete recommendation regarding a specific implementation of character strengths during the tiny house lifestyle cannot yet be given. It is important that tiny house builders' learn how to use and develop their personal character strengths to make the most efficient use of their character strengths while building and living in a tiny house. After all, tiny house builders and residents consciously choose this lifestyle to improve their mental health and to escape prior existential crises (Mangold & Zschau, 2019). A strength intervention is therefore necessary to ensure tiny house builders'/residents' well-being. In the current study, it is discovered which strengths are needed to increase subjective well-being

within the tiny house lifestyle. On the basis of these findings, it is recommended to employ an intervention design. In order to design an intervention, the findings of the current study must be complemented with findings on how to develop the identified strengths. In such a manner, an intervention could be designed in which tiny house builders could learn how to determine and use their character strengths efficiently in order to increase their subjective well-being. Research confirms that such strength interventions produce beneficial results in supporting individual well-being (Quinlan et. al., 2011). Afterward, the effects of the intervention should be tested by means of true experimental design, with a control and an experimental group. This way, tiny house builders and/or residents could learn how to use their character strengths to efficiently increase their well-being. Experimental research designs are the preferred choice when determining whether an intervention and its effects are useful (Bickman & Rog, 2009).

Finally, future research needs to distinguish between tiny house builders and residents living in a community or in solitude. In the current study, a number of indications appear (e.g. citizenship as strength to increase well-being) which are suggestive of differences in values, well-being and strengths between those two groups. It is recommended that these differences be investigated to gain a complete picture of tiny house builders and/or residents.

Conclusion

This study offers insight into, as well as awareness of the importance of, tiny house builders' and/or residents' usage of character strengths in their lifestyles. Above all, well-being is positively enhanced by employing one's strengths regardless of the context. The tiny house lifestyle is an exemplary case in which the use of character strengths is beneficial for subjective well-being. This qualitative study is the first step to connect the three concepts of character strengths, subjective well-being and tiny houses. Thereby, these concepts are uniquely addressed from the viewpoint of tiny house builders and residents. The tiny house lifestyle is found to provide a possibility for further developing one's character strengths and thus to elevate one's well-being. Hence, this study contributes to connecting tiny houses with positive psychology and lays the foundation for further research in this field of study.

References

- Bickman, L., & Rog, D. J. (2009). Applied Research Design: A Practical Approach. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods* (2nd ed., pp. 3–43). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483348858.n1>
- Boeckermann, L. M., Kaczynski, A. T., & King, S. B. (2018). Dreaming big and living small: examining motivations and satisfaction in tiny house living. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 34(1), 61–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-018-9616-3>
- Carver, S. C., & Scheier, M. F. (2002). Three Human Strengths. In L. G. Aspinwall, & U. M. Staudinger (Eds.), *A Psychology of Human Strengths: Fundamental Questions and Future Directions for a Positive Psychology* (pp. 87–102). Washington DC, United States of America: American Psychological Association.
- Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2005). Subjective Well-Being. In C. R. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 63–73). United States of America, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fern, E. F. (2001). Advanced Focus Group Research. In E. F. Fern (Ed.), *Methodological Issues in Focus Group Research: Representativeness, Independence, Degrees of Freedom, and Theory Confirmation* (pp. 121–148). Thousand Oaks, The United States of America: SAGE Publications.
- Forshaw, M. (2013). *Your Undergraduate Psychology Project - A student Guide* (2nd ed.). Chichester, The United Kingdom: British Psychological Society and John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Groth-Marnat, G., & Wright, A. J. (2016). *Handbook of Psychological Assessment* (6th ed.). Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2001). From the Individual Interview to the Interview Society. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research* (pp. 2–32). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412973588.n3>
- Horowitz, D. (2018). *Happier?: The History of a Cultural Movement that Aspired to Transform America*. New York, United States of America: Oxford University Press.
- Linley, P. A., Nielsen, K. M., Gillett, R., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2010). Using signature strengths in pursuit of goals: Effects on goal progress, need satisfaction, and well-being, and implications for coaching psychologists. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 5(1), 6–15. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Robert_Biswas-Diener/publication/281424792_Using_signature_strengths_in_pursuit_of_goals_Effec

- ts_on_goal_progress_need_satisfaction_and_well-being_and_implications_for_coaching_psychologists/links/5701838208ace995dde8db11/Using-signature-strengths-in-pursuit-of-goals-Effects-on-goal-progress-need-satisfaction-and-well-being-and-implications-for-coaching-psychologists.pdf
- Lyons, A. (2014). Approaches to Collecting Data. In P. Rohleder & A. Lyons (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Clinical and Health Psychology* (1st ed., pp. 74–91). Thousand Oaks, The United States of America: Macmillan Education UK.
- Magyar-Moe, J. L. (2009). Positive Psychological Tests and Measures. In J. L. Magyar-Moe (Ed.), *Therapist's Guide to Positive Psychological Interventions* (pp. 43–72). [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1873-0450\(09\)X0003-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1873-0450(09)X0003-3)
- Mangold, S., & Zschau, T. (2019). In Search of the “Good Life”: The Appeal of the Tiny House Lifestyle in the USA. *Social Sciences*, 8(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8010026>
- Millburn, J. F., & Nicodemus, R. (2015). *Minimalism: Live a Meaningful Life*. Retrieved from https://books.google.de/books?hl=en&lr=&id=rTRJAwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT3&dq=happiness+AND+minimalism&ots=zFMAXr0sYH&sig=VSa7yRwwZNyKqxNQw7v8PgjeS00&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=happiness%20AND%20minimalism&f=false
- Mutter, A. (2013). *Growing Tiny Houses Motivations and Opportunities for Expansion Through Niche Markets* (dissertation). Retrieved from <https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=4196241&fileId=4196242>
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2009). Character Strengths: Research and Practice. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1042>
- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Strengths of Character and Well-Being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(5), 603–619.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. Washington DC, United States of America: American Psychological Association.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 137–145. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137>
- Proctor, C., Maltby, J., & Linley, P. A. (2010). Strengths Use as a Predictor of Well-Being and

- Health-Related Quality of Life. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12(1), 153–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9181-2>
- Quinlan, D., Swain, N., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2011). Character Strengths Interventions: Building on What We Know for Improved Outcomes. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 13(6), 1145–1163. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9311-5>
- Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. (2005). From Social Structure to Biology. In C. R. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 541–555). United States of America, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York, United States of America: Free Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Positive Psychology, Positive Prevention, and Positive Therapy. In C. R. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 3–9). New York, The United States of America: Oxford University Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. New York, United States of America: Free Press.
- Shearer, H., & Burton, P. (2018). Towards a Typology of Tiny Houses. *Housing, Theory and Society*, , 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2018.1487879>
- Simpson, R. (1999). Urbanization, urban problems. In D. E. Alexander, & R. W. Fairbridge (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science* (pp. 648–650). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Sools, A. M., & Mooren, J. H. M. (2012). Towards Narrative Futuring in Psychology: Becoming Resilient by Imagining the Future. *Graduate journal of social science*, 9(2), 203–226.
- Wood, A. M., Liney, P. A., Maltby, J., Kashdan, T. B., & Hurling, R. (2011). Using personal and psychological strengths leads to increases in well-being over time: A longitudinal study and the development of the strengths use questionnaire. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 50(1), 15–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.08.004>
- Wright, B. A., & Lopez, S. J. (2005). Widening the Diagnostic Focus: A Case for Including Human Strengths and Environmental Resources. In C. R. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 26–44). New York, The United States of America: Oxford University Press.

Wyatt, A. (2016, February). Tiny Houses: Niche or Noteworthy? *American Planning Association*, pp. 39–42. Retrieved from
<https://www.planning.org/login/?next=/planning/2016/feb/tinyhouses.htm>

Appendices

Appendix A

Recruitment Message

Dear Tiny House Community,

We are two Psychology students who are currently writing their Bachelor Theses about the topic ‘Tiny Houses’. We study at the University of Twente in the Netherlands. In our Bachelor Theses, we aim to discover the reasons for your decision to move into a tiny house. In this context, we are interested to find out more about your intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that inspired you to downsize your belongings and to change your ordinary lifestyle. Also, we want to investigate how the use of strengths in the tiny house lifestyle is important and how it affects your well-being. Several existing studies suggest that tiny house builders and residents experience increased well-being and that strength use elevates well-being as well. Therefore, we generally aim to explore your subjective well-being as well as your conscious strengths use to discover which strengths might influence your subjective well-being while leading the tiny house lifestyle.

The study consists of two methods. First, we conduct an in-depth interview that takes approximately 60 minutes. During this interview, you will be asked to answer several questions about your motivations, decisions, well-being and strengths. Afterwards, you are asked to write a ‘Letter from the Future’. In particular, you need to imagine your desired future in your tiny house. Of course, your data will be handled confidentially.

If you are interested to participate in our study we will provide you with further information. We need 8 participants who are currently building or already living in their tiny houses. We would prefer to meet you in person when you are willing to help us out. Otherwise, Skype interviews would be possible too.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Kind regards,

Mia and Hannah

Appendix B

Interview Scheme

Introduction

Hello,

My name is [...]. First of all, I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in my study. In the following, I am going to ask you various questions regarding your decisions and your motivations to live in a tiny house. Also, I would like to explore your opinion on whether the conscious use of strengths in the process of building and living in a tiny house might have contributed to your subjective well-being well-being. Your responses will help me and my colleague for our bachelor theses that we are writing for the bachelor Psychology at the University of Twente.

The following interview is going to be audio recorded. All the data you provide will be handled confidentially. This means that all your personal data will be anonymised. The audio recordings will be destroyed after we transcribed the interviews. We do not believe that you should experience any discomfort. However, if this should be the case you can opt-out of the study at any time, without having to name a reason. We assume that the interview will last approximately 60 minutes. You can ask questions at any time during the interview if you do not understand a specific question or a concept that is covered during the interview.

Do you have any questions or expectations you would like to mention now before we begin with the interview? [*answer questions*] If you agree to these conditions, I would like you to read and sign an informed consent form [*handing over informed consent + signing*]. Thank you! The interview will start now [*start audio-recorder*]

General Questions

Okay so first, we start with some general questions.

1. Demographic questions
 - a) How old are you?
 - b) Female or Male?
 - c) What cultural background do you have?
2. Are you currently in the process of building your tiny house or are you already living in it?
 - a) If you finished building your tiny house: since when are you living in a tiny house? How many months/ years?

- b) If you are currently building your tiny house: since when do you build it and how long to you expect the building process to take? Why? Were there any obstacles?
3. What made you aware of the tiny house lifestyle? Can you give an example?
4. What/who motivated you to follow the tiny house lifestyle? Why? Can you give an example?
5. How do you intend to live in the tiny house?
 - a) If you already live in the tiny house, how is your living situation? Do you live alone or with a family etc? Why? How do you experience this?
 - b) If you are not yet living in the tiny house, how do you expect your living situation to be (i.e. living alone or with a family etc.)? Why?
6. How did you design your tiny house? Or how do you want to design your tiny house? Which steps do you need to take in order to build this tiny house?
 - a) What does your tiny house look like? (mobile tiny house, permanent tiny house, what facilities, etc.). Why does it look like this? Why did this have your preference?

Motivation Questions

Thank you for your responses so far! Now, we will continue with some questions concerning motivation. Specifically, motivation is a reason to act in a particular way. The following questions I am going to ask are about your motivation to build a tiny house or to follow the tiny house lifestyle. Thereby, I can gain a clear picture of your motivations.

1. What factors motivated you to build your tiny house/ to live in a tiny house? Can you give examples? Why did they motivate you?
2. What benefits do you see in building/ living in a tiny house? Why? Can you give examples?
3. What drawbacks do you see in building/ living in a tiny house? Why? Can you give examples?

Thank you for your previous responses. Now, I have some more specific questions. Specifically, motivation can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a person's inborn tendency to seek challenges and change in order to exercise own capacities. For instance, being ambitious is an intrinsic motivation. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is motivation that is driven by external rewards. Therefore, social support or

money include extrinsic motivations. Did you understand the difference between both concepts or do you need further explanation?

4. What intrinsic motivators can you identify as personal reasons for building/ living in a tiny house? Why would these be intrinsic? Examples?
5. What extrinsic motivators can you identify as contextual reasons for building/ living in a tiny house? Why would these be extrinsic? Examples?

Decision Questions

Next, I will ask you some questions about your decisions to move into a tiny house. Some of these questions are linked to specific concepts which I am going to explain more in depth. Three concepts are involved in decision making. These concepts are competence, relatedness and autonomy.

Competence concerns a person's feeling of control over something and the ability to handle it in an intended way. I would like to give you an example for this. A competent person would be a person who is determined to do something and succeeds in doing so as he/she is able to execute it in the manner as he/she intended to.

1. To what extent do you experience competence in building a tiny house/ leading a tiny house lifestyle? How? Examples?

The next concept involved in decisions is relatedness. Relatedness involves the interaction people experience in relation with other people. It involves how you care about other people in your environment. For this, an example would be having contact and meaningful relationships with people you care about such as family or friends.

2. To what extent do you experience relatedness in building a tiny house/ leading a tiny house lifestyle? How? Examples?

The final concept involved in decisions is autonomy. Autonomy manifests itself through your desire of being in harmony with yourself. It also means that you are the causal reason of your own decisions. To illustrate this definition I would like to give you an example of an autonomous person. Such a person is confident and able to make his/her own decisions.

3. To what extent do you experience autonomy in building a tiny house/ leading a tiny house lifestyle? How? Examples?

Well-being Questions

Now, I will continue with some questions concerning your subjective well-being. Altogether, well-being entails frequent positive experiences, high satisfaction with life and rarely occurring negative emotions.

I now have two general questions regarding your well-being.

1. Do you think the tiny house lifestyle affected your well-being? How? Examples?
2. Could you compare your well-being before and after your decision to lead a tiny house lifestyle. Why do you think that?

Thank you for your answers! In addition, it is believed that well-being consists of six dimensions. So in order to gain a complete understanding of your well-being, I have some more specific questions concerning these components of well-being. Please be careful to also consider your tiny house lifestyle when answering these questions.

3. So, self- acceptance is the first component of well-being. This involves perceiving yourself as favourable and accepting positive as well as negative parts of yourself. To what extent do you experience self-acceptance? How?
4. The second component of well-being entails positive relations with others. This includes nurturing, meaningful and satisfying relationships with different people. To what extent do you experience positive relations with others? How?
5. Next, experiencing autonomy is involved in well-being. This means that you are free and independent as well as able to take control over your life by resisting social pressures. To what extent do you experience autonomy? How?
6. Another component of well-being is environmental mastery. Environmental mastery comprises the ability to manage and to create environments suitable to personal needs and values. To what extent do you experience environmental mastery? How?
7. Last but not least, purpose in life is a defining component of well-being. This means that you have goals that you pursue to find meaning. To what extent do you experience purpose in life? How?
8. Finally, personal growth is the last component of well-being. Personal growth means that you continually develop yourself in that you are open-minded towards new experiences and self-knowledge. It also involves trying to reach your potential. To what extent do you experience personal growths? How?

Strengths Questions

Next, I will continue with some questions on your strengths. Strengths are positive characteristics that contribute to your personal fulfillment, enjoyment and well-being. Thereby, your strengths express themselves in your actions as well as in your emotions. Generally, strengths are important because they help you to achieve specific goals by enabling you to transform your dreams into reality.

1. What strengths do you generally think you have? Could you name them and give me some examples?

Thank you, these are already some good examples! Now, I would like to provide you with a list of 24 strengths as foundation for answering the next questions. Take your time to read the list carefully! [*handing over list*]

Do you have questions regarding the classification? Okay then, I would like to ask you some further questions about your strengths on basis of the list you just read.

2. What strengths do you believe you possess? How/when do you use these strengths? Examples?
3. What strengths do you consciously and actively use? Why/how?
4. What strengths do you believe you need for building a tiny house and/or leading a tiny house lifestyle? Why?
5. Do you think the use of strengths is important in building/ living in a tiny house?

Strengths and Well-Being Questions

1. Do you think the use of strengths is related to well-being? Why?
2. Do you think the use of strengths is important in increasing well-being? Why? How?
3. Do you think the use of strengths affected your well-being in the process of building/ living in a tiny house? Why? How? Examples?

Follow-up questions

In case participants answers are unclear, I probe deeper when necessary by asking:

1. Can you explain your answer further?
2. I am not sure what you mean. Can you explain that again?
3. Could you provide me with an example?

The Ending

Thank you for your participation! If you may have further questions or information you still want to discuss, we can do this now. We now would like to ask you to read the instructions on writing a 'Letter from the future' that is part of this study. After reading the instructions, you have the opportunity to ask questions if anything is unclear. If everything is clear, we would like to give you time to write the letter from the future and send it to us when you are ready. Preferably within 1 week after this interview. *[give e-mail address to participant or discuss other options AND discuss 'deadline']*

Appendix C

Classification of Character Strengths

Cited from Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 29-30

1. Wisdom and Knowledge - cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge

Creativity [originality; ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it

Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering

Open-mindedness [judgement, critical thinking]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides, *not* jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighting all evidence fairly

Love of learning: Mastering new skills, topics and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strengths of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows

Perspective [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and other people

2. Courage - emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal

Bravery [valor]: *Not* shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it

Persistence [perseverance, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; “getting it out the door”, taking pleasure in completing tasks

Integrity [authenticity, honesty]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions

Vitality [zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; *not* doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated

3. Humanity - interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others

Love: Valuing close relationships with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people

Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”]:

Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them

Social intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick

4. Justice - civic strengths that underlie healthy community life

Citizenship [social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one’s share

Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; *not* letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance

Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is member to get things done and at the same maintain time good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen

5. Temperance - strengths that protect against excess

Forgiveness and mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; *not* being vengeful

Humility/ Modesty: Letting one’s accomplishments speak for themselves; *not* seeking the spotlight, *not* regarding oneself as more special than one is

Prudence: Being careful about one’s choices; *not* taking undue risks; *not* saying or doing things that might later be regretted

Self-regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one’s appetites and emotions

6. Transcendence - strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning

Appreciation of beauty and excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience

Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks

Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about

Humor [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes

Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

Appendix D

Letter from the Future - Instructions for Tiny House Builders/ Residents

Dear participant,

You are asked to write a letter from a desired future. Imagine yourself years from now living in your tiny house. Be aware that you are writing the letter from a desired future to the present. This means that the future you are imagining has already been realized at the moment you write this letter. Consider the letter as a possibility for envisioning what possibilities your future might have to offer. Feel free to be creative and use your full imagination. You do not need to worry about grammar and spelling. Instead, be open and share whatever comes to your mind. In the following, a few clues are presented that might help you in writing and structuring your personal letter. The duration of writing the letter is estimated to last 20 minutes. However, you can take as long as you wish. As a guideline, the length of the letter could be about 1 A4 page.

Where and When?

Envision as vividly as possible where and when you are in your future. In particular, know how far in the future you travel regarding months, years or decades. Please state that explicitly. If you are building your tiny house right now, it is important that you imagine yourself living in it.

It does matter that you are still living in your tiny house when you envision your desired future. Still, you can imagine yourself living in a tiny house in any environment you desire. You may also think about yourself. In particular, imagine how you look and feel and who might be with you in your desired future.

What?

Imagine that your envisioned future is real. This might concern fulfillment of dreams and wishes as well as positive changes and personal achievements. Tell your own story in a manner that makes explicit how you have become the person you are in your desired future! In doing so, consider which motivations may have played an important role in your personal development and in the process of building your tiny house. Also, examine what specific strengths might have helped you in designing your desired future and your tiny house. Thereby, feel free to mention issues that may have been difficult for you or which are unresolved.

Describe your personal path (including motivators and strengths) towards this future. Maybe you want to give advice as well. How did your future emerge? How do you look back on your life?

To Whom?

You can choose to write the letter to any person in the present. You could write the letter to your present self or to another person which might be close to you.

Appendix E

Informed Consent

Investigators: Hannah Hanckmann & Mia Jebbink

Contact Persons: Hannah Hanckmann (h.hanckmann@student.utwente.nl), Mia Jebbink (m.jebbink@student.utwente.nl)

Dear participant,

We invite you to participate in an interview study. If you agree to participate, you will have to answer questions regarding your situation of living in a tiny house or building a tiny house. These questions will concern your demographics, your motivations, your decisions, your strengths and your well-being related to the tiny house lifestyle. The information you provide by answering the interview questions serve as data for bachelor theses of students of the University of Twente.

Additionally, we invite you to write ‘A letter from your future’. If you agree, you will have to imagine yourself being in the desired future. Specifically, you write a letter from the future to the present. You can address the letter to any person in the present. In doing so, you explain what your life in a tiny house looks like years from now. The information extracted from your letters will again serve as data for the researchers bachelor theses.

The goal of both methods is to find out motivators for living in a tiny house as well as whether the use of character strengths elevates tiny house builders well-being.

We do not believe that any personal threats or discomforts arise from participating in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you can opt-out at any time, without having to give a reason. Your data will be handled confidentially. Specifically, all personal information such as names, birth dates or places will be anonymised. Your data will be used for the research purposes of two bachelor theses. Be sure that you have understood every instruction concerning the study. If you have any questions about the study you can contact the researchers by using the contact details mentioned above.

The researchers will provide you with a copy of this document for your records. Also, the researchers themselves will keep a copy for the study records. In addition, by agreeing to participate in this study you allow the researchers to keep audio records of the interview. Your participation in this study will have the advantage of informing existing research with novel findings. No disadvantages should arise by your participation.

‘I hereby declare that I have been informed in a manner which is clear to me about the nature and method of the research as described by the researchers. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree of my own free will to participate in this research. I reserve the right to withdraw this consent without the need to give any reason and I am aware that I may withdraw from the experiment at any time. If my research results are to be used in scientific publications or made public in any other manner, then they will be made completely anonymous. My personal data will not be disclosed to third parties without my express permission. If I request further information about the research, now or in the future, I may contact the contact persons mentioned.’

.....

Date, Name subject Signature

I - the researcher - have provided explanatory notes about the research. I declare myself willing to answer to the best of my ability any questions which may still arise about the research.’

.....

Date, Name researcher Signature

Appendix F

Frequency of Subjective Well-Being Codes and Character Strength Codes

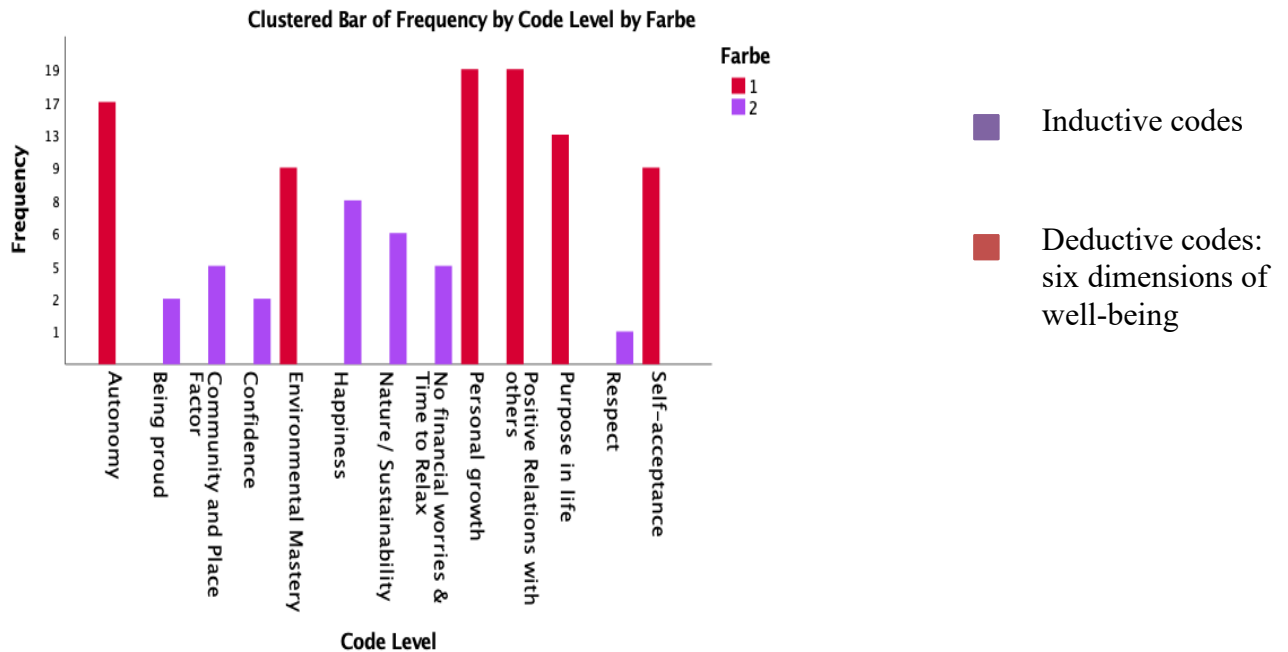


Figure 1. Frequencies with which participants mentioned experiences responding to a subjective well-being code

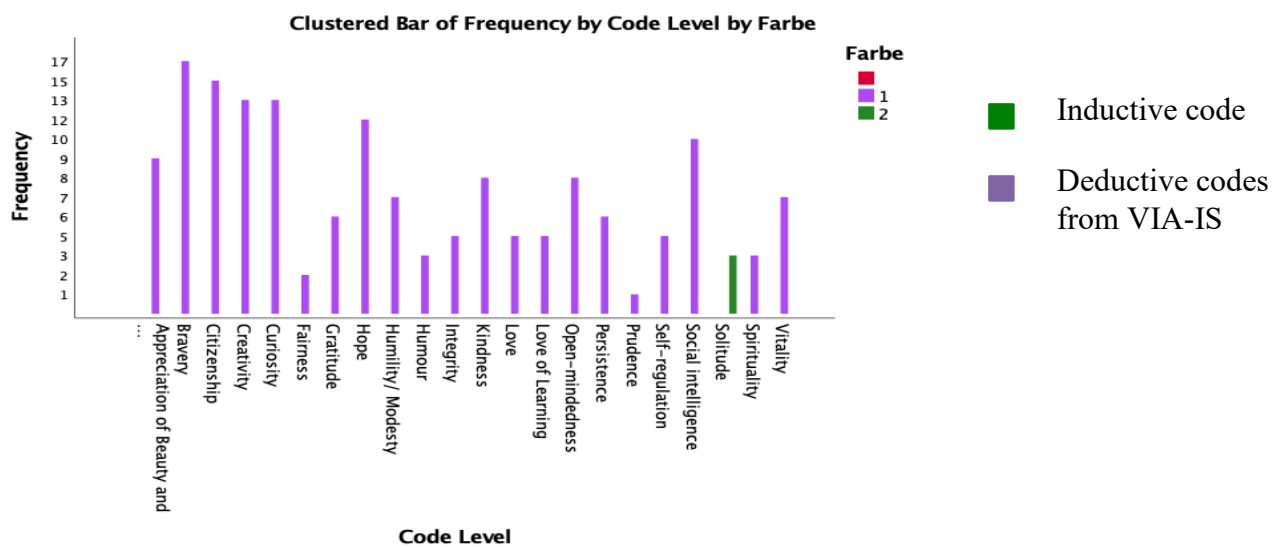


Figure 2. Frequencies with which participants mentioned experiences responding to a character strength code

Appendix G

Coding Scheme

Table 2

Coding Scheme Used to Analyse the Data including Groundwork

Main Code	Code Definition	Sub Code	Code Definition	Example Quotes	Variations/ Remarks
<i>Personal Character Strengths</i>	Positive qualities of the individual that he or she uses to perform at his or her best.	<i>Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence</i>	Enjoying and valuing beauty as well as skilled performances in various life domains, ranging from art to everyday life (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Appreciation of beauty and excellence - absolutely! I love to go to design exhibitions and if I like something then I say so too and I'm happy if the designers are happy! For instance, in that particular exhibition in B. - I enjoy discovering and seeing what's new and beautiful without wanting to have it.”	<i>Variations:</i> Some participants did not mention this strength, as they preferred functionality.
		<i>Bravery</i>	Bravery implies facing challenges and difficulties, speaking the truth and acting on personal principles even in face of	“I believe life is for living. If you are brave enough, your life will offer you an abundance of possibilities and opportunities.”	<i>Remarks:</i> All participants are courageous in a sense that they are not afraid of challenges, new experiences or resistance of social pressures.

	opposition (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).		
<i>Citizenship</i>	This strength includes social responsibility, loyalty and teamwork. It implies that people possessing this strength work well in groups and demonstrate their reliability within that group (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Teamwork ultimately means cooperating - I'm doing good for you and you're doing good for me. And I do that very well because I can understand others because I can understand myself. And I can support others because I can support myself.”	<i>Variations:</i> Some participants did not value teamwork because they preferred being autonomous.
<i>Creativity</i>	Creativity is defined as being original and conceptualizing problems in productive and novel ways. It also involves artistic and visionary creations (Peterson & Seligman,	<p>“I am definitely creative. I have always been creative. I used to paint a lot.”</p> <p>“So, a strength of mine is to develop 'novel ideas' [...] The strength is to connect things, to think in processes.”</p>	<i>Remarks:</i> Creativity does not only imply art but also thinking in new and productive ways

2004).			
<i>Curiosity</i>	Curiosity implies openness to experience and novelty. They explore and discover the world. They are fascinated by many ideas (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“For instance, when you asked if I want to take part in this study, I said yes because I was curious about it. And that is almost every time the case I encounter something new”	<i>Remarks:</i> Learning more about oneself, is also associated with curiosity
<i>Hope</i>	This strength is commonly defined as optimism. It involves the belief that the future will provide positive outcomes and actively working for a good future (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Hope - I am incredibly optimistic. So I always think positive. My motto is ‘If you think, you can also think positively’”	
<i>Humility/Modesty</i>	This strength implies being grounded and	“I believe that I have the strength of humility and modesty. That is because I do not need much for a good living. For instance, I rather work less than to	

	not regarding oneself as special. In doing so, humble individuals let their actions speak for themselves (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	have an abundance of money.”	
<i>Humor</i>	Humor involves playfulness and is defined as seeing the light side of things. It does not necessarily imply telling jokes (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Somehow I think a strength is also to not always take myself too seriously and also ... So I somehow know so many people who do not do things because they take life so extremely seriously and are influenced by social expectations. [...] And then I always think that you just do not have to take everything so seriously”	<i>Remarks:</i> Participants associated humor as well with being funny.
<i>Integrity</i>	This strength implies authenticity and honesty. People who possess this strength present themselves in a genuine manner (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“This has been more than clear to me in my life so far - especially in recent years - that honesty is something GREAT! I would like to give you this on the way! Always be honest - first of all to you ... listen in and consider your wishes!”	<i>Remarks:</i> Being honest to others is as important as being honest to oneself.

<i>Kindness</i>	Kind people are generous, compassionate and nice. Accordingly, they often do people favours and help them. In doing so, they are aware of other peoples' needs (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	"Kindness - that's me in any case! For example, I have friends who are not well-off financially and I support them by sending money to them. Or just through conversations and that I am the first contact point for many people here, I think I'm really very generous because I always help them with their problems"	
<i>Love of Learning</i>	This strength involves enjoying to master new skills and knowledge (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	"I love learning new things"	<i>Variations:</i> One participant used this strength to be autonomous, while another perceived this strength as important with regards to learning about oneself.
<i>Open-Mindedness</i>	Open-mindedness is defined as judgment and critical thinking. People, who possess this strength, reason before coming to conclusions.		<i>Remarks:</i> No participant mentioned this strength as personal strength. Instead, they said this strength would need to be learned, one should not have a fixed mindset and one should not devalue things; all participants equated this strength with judgment as a matter of translation.

	Thereby, information is carefully weighted and opinion is changed if evidence suggests so (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).		
<i>Persistence</i>	Persistent people finish tasks despite difficulties or obstacles. Thereby, they take pleasure in finishing duties and taking efforts (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“I have perseverance and diligence I in any case. I have it in my job, but I even more gained it through these Tiny Houses and through my brother's farm. So, I'm helping wherever I can and as long as I need to. So I'm often too diligent sometimes, but that's just the way it is”	<i>Variations:</i> One participant said he would not be persistent, as his strength ‘Vitality’ hinders him. In such a manner, he is often too excited to stay focused and persistent.
<i>Prudence</i>	This strength implies being careful and avoiding risks (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Sometimes I am very careful, which can slow me down again. K. instead does not let fears win and simply makes things happen.”	
<i>Self-Regulation</i>	Self-regulation is defined as	“Self-regulation is absolutely fine - I can fast, I can get along without eating anything without being	

	being disciplined and having one's desires as well as one's emotions and behaviours under control (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	angry. I do not feel anger anymore because I have a different approach now."	
<i>Social Intelligence</i>	Social intelligence implies that one is aware of and understands others as well as one's own emotions and thoughts. One is capable to react to social situations appropriately (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	"I am the first contact person for many people who have problems of interpersonal nature or problems with their partners"	<i>Remarks:</i> Awareness and Understanding of others emotions and thoughts is as important as understanding one's own emotions and thoughts. On these grounds, participants perceived self-knowledge as essential in having social intelligence.
<i>Solitude</i>	Solitude means that a person is able to spend time alone without feeling lonely (Peterson	"And another strength that comes to my mind is that I can be fine alone. And this alone is not really meant as alone, but that is now a borrowed word from one of our old poets who said 'I like to sit alone in a sociable cafe'. Socially alone ... so I feel the bondage and I still am alone for myself. There are so many	

			& Seligman, 2004).	people who are dependent on relationships, I do not know that feeling at all.”	
	<i>Spirituality</i>		Spirituality implies finding faith and purpose that provide oneself with meaning (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Yes, I am spiritual and this appeals to me. Not everything is explainable, including our actions. That's why the spiritual is so meaningful to me. I also read a few books about it and there are some things that I find exciting.”	<i>Remarks:</i> All participants who thought they would be spiritual disagreed with the VIA definition, as they did not equated spirituality with religion.
	<i>Vitality</i>		Vitality is defined as enthusiasm and energy. People who possess this strength have an attitude towards life that is marked by excitement, lust for adventure and feeling alive (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Yes I can be enthusiastic. So I inspire myself often but I do not like being inspired by others. Still, in my opinion, enthusiasm is one of my strengths because I also take time to sit down and get excited about something. For instance, I was getting enthusiastic about Yoga by sitting down and informing myself through reading books. As a result, I got intrinsically enthusiastic.”	<i>Variations:</i> One participant mentioned that his enthusiasm would be too strong developed, which would be bad because this interferes with his persistence.
<i>Character Strengths needed for the tiny house lifestyle</i>	Positive qualities of an individual that he or she considers as useful within	<i>Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence</i>	Enjoying and valuing beauty as well as skilled performances in various life	“I think the Tiny House should be beautiful. I definitely have an aesthetic aspiration.”	<i>Variations:</i> Participant thought the tiny house should be practical and functional rather than beautiful.

the tiny house lifestyle.

domains, ranging from art to everyday life (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Bravery

Bravery implies facing challenges and difficulties, speaking the truth and acting on personal principles even in face of opposition (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

“So in any case, you need courage to continue to live [life in the Tiny House] and also, as I said, there can always be such obstacles as, for example, that the building office comes here or that something changes socially and I think that one needs courage for that. And I'll definitely need that courage and that's good too.”

Remarks: Bravery in the tiny house context is also associated with simply doing things without thinking about the consequences.

Citizenship

This strength includes social responsibility, loyalty and teamwork. It implies that people possessing this strength work well in groups and demonstrate their reliability within that group (Peterson

“Nobody builds a Tiny House all by himself. So, I think everybody needs help with building and that's why I think that's a very important strength.”

“I feel like we all complement each other quite well here in our community”

Remarks: Citizenship as important to live in a community because no participant living in solitude mentioned this strength as being important.

<hr/>			
& Seligman, 2004).			
<i>Creativity</i>	Creativity is defined as being original and concept-ualizing problems in productive and novel ways. It also involves artistic and visionary creations (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	<p>“Without creativity, we probably would not have started to build a Tiny House. It is important, I believe, and we all use it.”</p> <p>“In order to build a Tiny House you need imagination a lot.”</p>	<p><i>Remarks:</i> Creativity as necessary for the building process of a tiny house.</p> <p><i>Variations:</i> One participant mentioned, if someone wants to build a tiny house but is not creative, he or she should hire someone who builds the tiny house for that person.</p>
<i>Curiosity</i>	Curiosity implies openness to experience and novelty. They explore and discover the world. They are fascinated by many ideas (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Absolutely! I think I speak for all, if I say otherwise we probably would not have come across the Tiny House lifestyle. It was curiosity that drew our attention to tiny houses. I think we all have this strength and need it to live in the Tiny House.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Curiosity as reason to start the tiny house lifestyle.
<i>Fairness</i>	Fairness is defined as treating all	“I think we need this strength to live in harmony in our community. So it is definitely important if you want to live in a tiny house community.”	<i>Remarks:</i> This strength was only mentioned by tiny house builders who actually lived in a community.

	people alike and giving everybody a chance without biasing decisions through personal opinions (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).		
<i>Gratitude</i>	This strength implies being thankful for positive experiences. Such people value to thank someone and take time to express their appreciation (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“I think especially by the reducing one's ownings, one is much more grateful for everything that one still possesses.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Gratitude becomes especially prominent during and after the Tiny House building process. Essentially, participants were grateful for all helpers and the experiences they gained during the tiny house lifestyle.
<i>Hope</i>	This strength is commonly defined as optimism. It involves the belief that the future will provide positive	“You also need to have hope to build your tiny house, so you keep going even though difficulties may arise. Everybody who builds a tiny house comes to a point where he does need to make a decision and nobody can help him in doing so. So you definitely need hope because you believe everything will work out fine in the end and this keeps you going.”	

	outcomes and actively working for a good future (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).		
<i>Humility/Modesty</i>	This strength implies being grounded and not regarding oneself as special. In doing so, humble individuals let their actions speak for themselves (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“And humility is never wrong because you do not have a lot of space in your tiny house. And if you are humble you do not need to fill your small space.”	
<i>Humor</i>	Humor involves playfulness and is defined as seeing the light side of things. It does not necessarily imply telling jokes (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“I had already told you that you should not take life too seriously in many ways. In such a manner you can also build things like your Tiny House.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Reference to using humour as defence from social pressure.

<i>Integrity</i>	This strength implies authenticity and honesty. People who possess this strength present themselves in a genuine manner (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Yes, I also think that honesty plays a very important role in a community. It's probably also honesty with yourself. When you decide to build a Tiny House, you have to understand where your strengths and weaknesses are or what you can do and what you cannot do. Honesty is definitely important to yourself, too, and it becomes more pronounced when you successfully implement a Tiny House project.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Honesty to oneself is as important as honesty to other people.
<i>Kindness</i>	Kind people are generous, compassionate and nice. They often do people favours and help them. In doing so, they are aware of other peoples' needs (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“And I also think that we all have relatively similar experiences in community life and that's how we learned to be friendly and generous. I think that is a strength of all of us, which we need for our coexistence co-existence because you have to be friendly and generous to live peacefully in a community.”	
<i>Love</i>	People who value close and meaningful relationships possess this strength (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“I think that is the foundation for every community life. Therefore, I think it is important for every tiny house community.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Was also mentioned by one participant living in solitude, who wants to touch many peoples lives. <i>Variations:</i> Two participants mentioned that they do not want to be involved in a romantic relationship anymore.

<i>Love of Learning</i>	This strength involves enjoying to master new skills and knowledge (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“Love of learning was the beginning and the reason of my Tiny House story. Not only the building process concerned my love of learning but I also got books and read about it. So for me this is also the love of learning.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Strength as reason to start tiny house process; learning about oneself as important as well.
<i>Open-Mindedness</i>	Open-mindedness is defined as judgment and critical thinking. People, who possess this strength, reason before coming to conclusions. Information is carefully weighted opinion can be changed if evidence suggests so (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“So I need judgment when evaluating information. I often get advice from outside concerning the construction process of my house and then I have a lot of different opinions that I have to balance and for that I also need judgment to understand which advice to take in the end.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Participants mentioned that this strength is also necessary when already living in a tiny house, as you need to be able to take different perspectives to talk with people who might be disturbed by the tiny house lifestyle.
<i>Persistence</i>	Persistent people finish tasks despite difficulties or	“Also persistence is important. Either you do it or you don’t. Also you need to be persistent, as not every problem you encounter while building a tiny house comes with a solution.”	

	obstacles. Thereby, they take pleasure in finishing duties and taking efforts (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).		
<i>Self- Regulation</i>	Self-regulation is defined as being disciplined and having one's desires as well as one's emotions and behaviours under control (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“To some extent each of us should have self- regulation. Otherwise you could not live minimalistically, I guess.”	<i>Remarks:</i> By living in a tiny house self-regulation was learned.
<i>Social Intelligence</i>	Social intelligence implies that one is aware of and understands others as well as one's own emotions and thoughts. One is capable to react to social situations	“Social skills are important because it's not just about being yourself, but also about being part in a community - building with others - [...] people who want to live in a Tiny House village, for example, want to do something together and therefore are social skills important”	<i>Remarks:</i> Strength as important for living in a community.

			appropriately (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).		
		<i>Solitude</i>	Solitude means that a person is able to spend time alone without feeling lonely (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“So this all around ... this nature - that's important to me personally! Even that is not feasible in a crowd, that does not work.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Solitude is needed to live in harmony with nature.
		<i>Vitality</i>	Vitality is defined as enthusiasm and energy. People who possess this strength have an attitude towards life that is marked by excitement, lust for adventure and feeling alive (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“That's where it starts right? I think otherwise we would not have dealt with this way of life at all, let alone tried to live it that way.”	<i>Remarks:</i> Vitality and enthusiasm as reason to adopt the tiny house lifestyle.
<i>Positive Effect of Tiny House Lifestyle on Subjective</i>	Individuals living the tiny house lifestyle experience	<i>Self-Acceptance</i>	Individuals perceive themselves as overall positive even though	“Well, I would say in any case, when building or living in the Tiny House, it is a process of getting to know yourself. You learn about new and diverse aspects of yourself and I personally think that self-acceptance is one of these aspects. [...] I realize, ‘I'm	<i>Variations:</i> Participants learned self-acceptance through the tiny house building; self-acceptance suffered as building a tiny house was stressful and opaque; self-acceptance did not change

<i>Well-being</i>	frequent positive emotions and a high satisfaction with life, while negative emotions occur rarely.	they might recognize negative aspects of themselves (Ryff & Singer, 2005).	just like that' and 'I react that way' and then I feel completely comfortable with the idea that I am just like that."	during the tiny house lifestyle.
	<i>Positive Relations with Others</i>	Individuals establish meaningful and deep relationships to various people (Ryff & Singer, 2005).	"I am getting more in contact with people that are living similar to me. So I am more in contact with people that have a similar mindset or with people that have a similar lifestyle. And this is part of my well-being. So, not to be every time the freak who lives like a Hippie."	<i>Variations:</i> Participants noted that leading positive relations with others is exhausting in the long run, as a partner might not be able to handle the tiny house lifestyle.
	<i>Experiencing Autonomy</i>	Individuals are able to make self-determined decisions independent from societal pressures (Ryff & Singer, 2005).	"The [new] house has wheels, because this property does not belong to me and it could be that my nephews say that someday if they take over the farm, they don't want me to live here. But then the house is not fixed and then I can just say 'Adios I'm going now.' So that's just ... I'm a bit more flexible, which has something to do with a feeling of freedom. So, I am not pinned down to one place."	<i>Remarks:</i> Higher state of autonomy was achieved by not having financial duties.
	<i>Environmental Mastery</i>	Individuals are able to create surroundings That match their values and needs (Ryff & Singer, 2005).	"So this environmental mastery is indeed the freedom I have here - that has something to do with the environment, that I can just beat my firewood here, that I do not have to mow the lawn as it is expected in the village, that I am here planting a tree - I think that is somehow ... So, I do not want to control my environment, but I can create it in a manner that I am a bit more in harmony with nature."	<i>Variations:</i> One participant mentioned that he does not need to master his environment but that he rather cares for the people living in it. <i>Remarks:</i> Participants mentioned frequently that the building of the tiny house is an example of environmental mastery

<i>Purpose in Life</i>	Individuals have goals in life they pursue to find meaning (Ryff & Singer, 2005).	<p>“So, I generally think that such a big and long lasting project, which also includes fundamental things, is a quite meaningful purpose”</p> <p>“In general, just doing things by yourself involves goal setting as well. And when that is finally finished, you have reached your goal”</p>	<p><i>Variations:</i> Tiny house as one project in a whole building block of projects.</p> <p><i>Remarks:</i> Participants generally had purposes in life independently of the tiny house, e.g. to live life as it happens.</p>
<i>Personal Growth</i>	Individuals constantly develop themselves in order to research their potential (Ryff & Singer, 2005).	<p>“I think this whole process of evolving and growing is somehow more automatic if you do anything you were afraid of, which seems somehow so big and unachievable in the beginning. And that's just such a project for me here, so to build the Tiny House. But I also feel that I can develop a lot further. And that's why this project is just such a nice confirmation.”</p>	<p><i>Variations:</i> Personal growths as indirect result from living in a tiny house. In particular, conversations with the alternative tiny house community fostered personal growth. Also, participants mentioned that you only understand in retrospect your development.</p> <p><i>Remarks:</i> Challenges play a big role in personal growths as well as doing something you have been afraid of</p>
<i>Being Proud</i>	Individuals are filled with elation when they look at their achievements.	<p>“I am proud of what I could do. And proud of what I created.”</p>	
<i>Community and Place Factor</i>	Happiness in the tiny house lifestyle depends on where the tiny house itself is placed and	<p>“I can only summarize that your house is one thing, but your environment in which your house is placed is the other. That means if you stand alone somewhere, then your place can still be so beautiful, but you'll always feel weird ...”</p>	<p><i>Remarks:</i> Participants living in solitude did not mention this factor; also the place was important: Whether the tiny house was connected to an urban area or to nature depends on values of the person</p>

	with whom tiny house builders live.		
<i>Confidence</i>	Individuals trust their abilities.	“I think it's good that I can trust myself now. If I remember the beginning of building a house, it was extremely difficult. Now I know that things just work when you simply do them”	<i>Remarks:</i> Participants confidence increased as a result of starting/ leading the tiny house lifestyle.
<i>Happiness</i>	Individuals are filled with joy.	<p>“I am happy about my creation [the tiny house] everyday”</p> <p>“It [the tiny house lifestyle] feels very good, it is liberating and exciting”</p>	
<i>Nature/ Sustain-ability</i>	Environmental values play an important role for individuals.	<p>“So I live with nature. I'm always outside [...] that's great for me”</p> <p>“Now I live in a house where every detail has a valid reason. From the optics and my personal needs, to the needs of all people on this earth: It consists of natural building materials.”</p>	
<i>No Financial Worries & Time to Relax</i>	Individuals do not have to work much but still have enough money to afford their life and be able to spend their time in a manner they want to.	“I was living before in an apartment and I had to pay 1800 euros for rent per month. So for 80 square meters. It was a pretty nice building and it is a pretty nice apartment but the rent was way too high. And it makes a big difference if you only have to pay 150 euros for your tiny house per month. And I have had from one moment to another 1500 euros for free to spend or due to the fact that I am freelancing I did not have to work as much to afford my life. And this affected me positively”	

		“I have more time to do what I really want and care about”			
		<i>Respect</i>	Individuals hold each other in high esteem and treat each other fair.	“Then there's something else ... the respect - I've learned here in the little room to treat each other with the utmost respect when I'm with my children or / and a partner. We always have a lot of fun ... because we respect each other”	<i>Remarks:</i> Only mentioned by one participant.
<i>Positive Effect of Specific Character Strengths on Subjective Well-Being in the Tiny House Lifestyle</i>	Positive qualities of an individual that are useful to increase well-being within the tiny house lifestyle.	<i>Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence</i>	Enjoying and valuing beauty as well as skilled performances in various life domains, ranging from art to everyday life (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“I've always been the practical guy who thought: the main thing is it works, but with your sense of beauty, you've created a house in which I feel super comfortable and well.”	
		<i>Bravery</i>	Bravery implies facing challenges and difficulties, speaking the truth and acting on personal principles even in face of opposition (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	“You mastered something that worried you a lot. That's how you became someone else. Someone who developed somehow further and became more mature than before. More complete and more comprehensive...”	

<i>Citizenship & Kindness</i>	Being kind in a community has a positive effect on well-being in the tiny house lifestyle.	"I have always felt particularly comfortable, especially when I have somehow helped in the community with my strengths. That's a really nice feeling."	
<i>Humility/Modesty</i>	This strength implies being grounded and not regarding oneself as special. In doing so, humble individuals let their actions speak for themselves (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	"I have limited myself to the essentials. I do not use more space than I need. That also means that I do not have to care for more rooms and things than I really need. That makes me feel relieved."	
<i>Relation between Character Strengths, Subjective Well-Being and the Tiny House Lifestyle</i>	The interplay between and the usefulness of the three concepts of character strengths, subjective well-being and the tiny house lifestyle is	<p>"I think the context of Tiny Houses provides you with space to apply your strengths and, above all, to develop your strengths because you can just try yourself out."</p> <p>"This satisfaction from creating your own house is a completely different quality - in a positive sense. And I think my strengths did enable me to create this tiny house and as a result my well-being is elevated as I experienced a lot of satisfaction in the building process."</p>	<p><i>Variations:</i> One participant mentioned that one should not only focus on strengths but also on weaknesses, as weakness can be motivating as well; another participant explained that the strength of learning necessary strengths is important because if anybody would do what he thinks is his strengths, no one would actually accomplish things that were initially perceived as being impossible.</p> <p><i>Remarks:</i> Use of strengths as</p>

considered.

foundation for building the tiny house and thus to experience well-being; tiny house lifestyle as opportunity to use one's strengths and to thus increase well-being.
