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Leisure innovation and the transition to retirement

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Abstract

Innovation theory posits that adopting new leisure activities contributes to well-being in later life. We explored the relevance of Innovation theory among Canadian baby boomers transitioning to retirement. Utilizing grounded theory and online qualitative methods, we recruited baby boomers who had recently retired or were planning to retire in the next five years. Twenty-five participants engaged in three two-week blogging sessions, followed by face-to-face focus groups/interview over about one year. Data, including blog posts from each session, and focus group/interview transcripts, were analyzed using initial, focused, and theoretical coding. Two main themes, embracing retirement, and pursuing new and former leisure, highlighted nuances of leisure and the transition to retirement as participants adjusted to increased free time along with shifting priorities and available resources. The findings supported innovation theory, and suggested areas of refinement.

Keywords: aging, innovation, leisure, retirement

Introduction

The retirement transition is a positive experience for many, characterized by freedom from work and its related stressors (Kleiber & Linde, 2014; Kloep & Hendry, 2006). Others, however, find it challenging as they struggle with the loss of structure and social contacts inherent in the workplace environment (Earl, Gerrans, & Harim, 2015; Kleiber & Linde, 2014).

Retirement has been viewed as an opportunity for new possibilities even when the initial transition is difficult (Jaumot-Pascual, Monteagudo, Kleiber, & Cuenca, 2016; Principi et al., 2018). Increased leisure time is one such opportunity. Researchers have consistently demonstrated that leisure has positive implications for well-being in later life (Dupuis, 2008), and that it contributes to coping with later life transitions. The relationship between leisure and

quality of life increases with time – thus leisure becomes more beneficial with increased age (Nimrod & Shrira, 2016). Nimrod and Shrira (2016) examined the relationship between leisure and quality of life among older adults utilizing four waves of longitudinal survey data. Cross-sectional findings demonstrated a stronger relationship between leisure and quality of life among older adults compared to younger ones. Longitudinal analysis suggested that older adults who engaged in leisure over time had a higher quality of life than those who did not. Even when leisure constraints increase due to changes in health and physical capacity, leisure contributed to quality of life (Nimrod & Shrira, 2016).

Recently researchers have started considering leisure innovation in later life, where innovation refers to adding new activities to one's leisure repertoire (Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007). Innovation theory postulates that some older adults seek out and engage in new leisure activities as a way to reinvent or preserve a sense of self (Nimrod, 2008). However, Nimrod and Kleiber suggest that because the theory is at “a formative stage,” (p. 18) additional research is necessary to refine it. Furthermore, research into innovation has explored leisure largely among educated, middle class, retired adults and more research is needed to understand the impact of personal, contextual, and cultural factors (Nimrod, 2016).

Despite growth in retirement and aging research guided by innovation, the applicability of innovation to Canadian baby boomers (born 1946 -1965) who are transitioning to retirement has received scant attention. Baby boomers are further divided into early baby boomers (born 1946 -1954) and later baby boomers (also called Generation Jones, born 1954 -1965; Pontell, 2007). The purpose of this article is to explore the role of leisure in the transition to retirement amongst baby boomers and to consider the relevance of innovation theory during the transition.

Literature Review

Innovation Theory

Traditionally, theories of aging emerging from sociology and psychology have provided lenses through which to view leisure and aging. These theories, such as continuity theory and activity theory, while relevant to leisure and aging research, were not designed specifically to understand leisure meanings or behavior. Innovation theory, developed by Nimrod and Kleiber (2007) and Nimrod (2008), provides an alternative.

Innovation theory is unique as it is strictly a theory of leisure and aging, emerging from grounded theory research conducted by leisure researchers. As such, it provides leisure researchers with a way to consider leisure in later life that may lead to greater insight into the meaning and experiences of leisure. Innovation theory posits that adopting new leisure activities in later life (leisure innovation) “can be growth promoting and liberating...while at the same time generally protecting a sense of internal continuity” (Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007, p. 1).

There are four major tenets of innovation theory. First, innovation is generally motivated by internal factors or by a combination of internal and external factors (Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007). Internal factors may include curiosity or long-held interest in an activity (Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007); freedom from social and domestic responsibilities which allow for opportunities for spontaneity (Liechty, Yarnal, & Kerstetter, 2012); and a desire for health or learning (Campbell & Yang, 2011; Liechty et al., 2012). External factors may include death of a spouse, available leisure resources (e.g., a community centre, available time and money), or encouragement from someone else (Campbell & Yang, 2011; Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007).

Second, adding new activities provides opportunities for personal growth, renewal of previously held interests, and reconstruction of identity. Nimrod and Kleiber (2007) identify two types of innovation. Self-reinvention innovation occurs when older adults adopt new activities unrelated to their history. Instead, they represent a new direction and a changed identity. Self-

preservation innovation is characterised by adding new activities that are consistent with previous activities, such as adding a similar activity, seeking out a new path for a previous activity, or developing new skills. Self-preservation innovation appears to be more common than self-reinvention innovation and those who opt for self-reinvention innovation tend to have higher incomes than those who do not (Nimrod, 2016). Nimrod and Kleiber (2007) argue that self-reinvention may offer optimism toward possibilities of life, where self-preservation innovation may enable growth while preserving continuity of self. The third claim is closely related to the second, and suggests that that individuals are likely to engage in similar types of innovation, meaning that they tend to add new activities which lead to either re-invention or preservation of self (Nimrod, 2008).

The final tenet of innovation theory states that adopting new leisure activities improves well-being by helping older adults “feel active, dynamic, vital, daring, and youthful,” and by “creating an opportunity for broadening and deepening the sense of meaning in life” (Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007, p. 834). Research has highlighted the impact of adding new activities on well-being in later life. Among retirement aged women, innovation contributed to well-being in several ways, including self-expression, development of social connections, sense of independence, and self-care (Liechty et al., 2012). Older adults with chronic conditions also reported several positive outcomes of innovation that contributed to enhanced well-being, such as feeling better about oneself, feelings of pride and confidence, and acceptance of one’s self and one’s limitations (Nimrod & Hutchinson, 2010). Additionally, innovation helped participants to sustain meaningful roles in both new activities and substituted activities (Nimrod & Hutchinson, 2010).

Although there is compelling support for leisure innovation in later life, other researchers dispute whether innovation is common among older adults. Earl et al. (2015) argue that continuity is more common, as only 23% of their surveyed participants added new leisure activities. Instead, the majority of participants preferred to continue long-term leisure activities. Those who added new activities did not report the same increase in self efficacy and mastery as participants who did not. Gender differences may impact leisure innovation. Jaumot-Pascual et al. (2016) found that men spent more time in previous activities, whereas women were more likely to add new activities, such as adult education or volunteering.

According to Nimrod (2008), leisure and aging researchers need to address “a new research agenda,” and explore individuals’ experiences of leisure innovation. Innovation theory may be specifically applicable to baby boomers because, as a generation, they have more discretionary income, more opportunities, and perceive fewer societal constraints to leisure than the previous generation (Freedman, 2002). Furthermore, rather than focusing on decline, innovation theory takes a positive approach to later life, in which aging is viewed as a process characterized by enjoyment, learning, and growth (Liechty et al., 2012).

Leisure and Retirement

Leisure contributes to well-being and life satisfaction in later life overall, and in the transition to retirement specifically (Nimrod, 2007). For example, a survey of retirees revealed that engagement in social and educational activities after retirement positively impacted mastery and self-efficacy (Earl et al., 2015). A Norwegian study of retired professionals found that the majority were happy with retirement and appreciated the increased free time it brought. These participants embraced retirement and sought out a wide range of leisure activities in order to thrive (Kloep & Hendry, 2006). In addition to improving satisfaction in later life, leisure

engagement in retirement can have benefits for older adults' cognitive, social, and physical well-being (Broughton, Payne, & Liechty, 2017; Paggi, Jopp, & Hertzog, 2016).

Research has shown that baby boomers, in particular, look forward to diverse leisure activities, including travel, hobbies, social engagement, physical activity, and creative arts (McCormack, Cameron, Campbell, & Pollack, 2008; Principi et al., 2018). Sperazza and Banerjee's (2010) survey revealed higher levels of physical activity among baby boomers and a greater preference for outdoor activities, sports, and aquatics than the previous generation.

Of course, not all retirees look forward to retirement, instead experiencing uncertainty and anxiety (Principi et al., 2018). Kloep and Hendry (2006) found that some retirees were more interested in work than retirement and felt a sense of loss for several years following the transition. Leisure pursuits were not perceived as valid substitutes for work and retirement was equated with old age. Kloep and Hendry also found that some retirees were very unhappy during retirement, particularly if they experienced poor health or provided care to a loved one. Participants who were unhappy with retirement tended to have few leisure activities and little social support. Similarly, regarding physically active leisure, Van Dyck, Cardon, and De Bordeaudhuij (2017) found that retirees who were less engaged felt that there were too few opportunities tailored toward older adults.

The transition to retirement is complex and much is still unknown about the role of leisure in retirement for baby boomers. Furthermore, little is known about leisure innovation and its role in the lives of older adults. Although some researchers have found that innovation theory is relevant for retirees, others have found little support for the addition of new activities in later life. The purpose of this study was to explore leisure experiences of Canadian baby boomers and gain insight into the applicability of innovation theory among this population. We aimed to

explore leisure attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors among Canadian baby boomers who are nearing retirement or recently retired to enable leisure researchers and service providers to better understand their leisure needs. Research questions included:

1. How do Canadian baby boomers spend their leisure time?
2. What are the meanings of leisure participation for them?
3. To what degree do baby boomers experience and/or seek out innovation in leisure? How does the transition to retirement contextualize innovation?
4. How (if at all) can existing theories be used or combined to understand the leisure needs of Canadian baby boomers?

Methods

We employed constructivist grounded theory and online qualitative research methods. Constructivist grounded theory places emphasis on diverse worlds, multiple realities and complexities (Charmaz, 2014). It was selected as the methodology for this study because it allowed us to bring open minds to our research and to: "...attend to what we see, hear, and sense while gathering data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 3). Additionally, a constructivist approach seeks to understand how participants construct meanings and actions, which was appropriate for this study as we sought to understand meanings participants associated with the transition they were experiencing. Online research methods range from internet surveys to netnography (Fielding, Lee, & Blank, 2008), and allow for efficient and cost-effective data collection (Comley & Beaumont, 2011). We collected data through a multi-author blog, or group blog, which allowed our participants to not only post on the blog, but to interact with others by commenting on posts (Hearst & Dumais, 2009).

Participants

Invitations to participate in this study were distributed through email (e.g., workplace listservs), through online classified ads, and posters displayed in local community centres. In order to best understand the transition to retirement we used theoretical sampling to include both participants who were recently retired and those who were planning to retire within five years. Most retirement research has sampled only those who have already retired, however, to understand the transition we sought participants in various stages of the transition, including some who retired during the study. Potential participants were invited to contact the first author by telephone or email. At that time, more details regarding the study were provided, and an in-person meeting was scheduled with each participant.

Thirty-three participants volunteered for the study. Eight participants dropped out, leaving a final sample of 25 participants, including 20 women and five men ranging in age from 47-66. Twelve participants were retired and 13 were still in the workplace. Income ranged from less than \$30 000/year to more than \$100 000/year. Participants who were early baby boomers were more likely to be retired, while younger boomers, or members of Generation Jones, were more often still working (See table 1).

Insert Table 1 here

Data Collection

We asked participants to share their experiences of retirement and leisure on the secure multi-author blog for three two-week sessions over a year. Participants were invited to write new posts each time they logged on to the blog, or to comment on the post(s) of another participant. Participants received an orientation to using the blog during individual face-to-face meetings. At that time, they created their login information, including a unique screen name,

user-id, and password. Participants received an instruction booklet and a list of guiding questions to consider when posting on the blog, and they completed informed consent.

The guiding questions were also posted on the blog so that participants could access them quickly when blogging. Examples of guiding questions included: What did you do with your free time today? Are any of these activities new? Why did you choose these activities? What did these activities mean to you? (author & co-authors, 2016). Following each data collection session, blog posts and comments were copied and pasted into a word document for data analysis. In total, there were 337 blog posts and 309 comments. Through the multi-author blog, supportive communities were created as participants shared ideas advice regarding retirement transitions (author & co-author, 2016).

Once online data collection was completed and preliminary findings identified, participants were invited to attend one of five focus groups. Seventeen participants attended focus groups and one additional participant did an interview due to scheduling conflicts. Focus groups/interview lasted 30-120 minutes, and were digitally recorded and transcribed. The focus groups served as a means of member checking and to follow up on questions that arose throughout our analysis. At the beginning of each focus group, we presented our initial analysis. Then we asked questions such as: What additional leisure changes have you experienced since posting on the final blog? Is retirement different than how you imagined? How so? We also discussed themes that were underdeveloped and asked about challenges and benefits of participating in the blog (see author & co-author, 2016 for more information).

Data Analysis

Blog posts and focus group transcripts were analyzed together using initial, focused and theoretical coding to identify themes and subthemes (Charmaz, 2014). There were no major

differences between the blog posts and focus groups with regard to leisure and retirement. The authors met regularly to discuss emerging codes, themes and subthemes. First, each author read each document several times. Then, using initial coding, we individually read each line carefully noting codes in the margins of the documents. Next, we used focused coding to categorize larger segments of the data and theoretical coding to identify relationships between emerging categories. Videoconference meetings allowed us to discuss emerging themes and subthemes and their definitions thoroughly, and to explore the relationships between themes more fully. Using constant comparison (Charmaz, 2014), we made comparisons within and across all blog posts and focus group transcripts. We compared statements within one session of blogging with all other statements within that two-week session. Then, we compared each session with the other sessions and focus group data to find similarities and differences among them. Memo-writing occurred throughout data analysis. Although we were familiar with innovation theory, we did not intentionally use it to guide data analysis. Our analysis revealed two main themes: 1) embracing retirement and 2) pursuing new and former leisure.

Findings

Embracing retirement

Leisure was a way of *embracing retirement* before, during, and immediately following the transition. Pre-retirement participants looked forward to greater flexibility and opportunities to engage in leisure. These participants wrote on the blog about looking forward to additional time to visit family and friends, travel, and pursue hobbies. Those who were already retired engaged in several leisure endeavors that they were unable to pursue as frequently prior to retirement. Regardless of work status, retirement was viewed as a life phase full of possibility and an opportunity for exploring new and former aspects of oneself. Leisure was perceived as a

way of taking advantage of newfound flexibility and freedom that retirement offered. Embracing retirement was comprised of several subthemes, including negotiating tensions between being and doing, balancing structure and flexibility, and building and renewing connections.

Negotiating tensions between being and doing.

Tension existed between participants' notions of being and doing. Some participants wished to embrace the experience of *being*, rather than focusing on accomplishing particular tasks, which was the norm during working years. Productivity, or *doing*, led to feelings of accomplishment, yet participants felt that now was the time to allow daily life to unfold naturally and to be accepting of not always having something specific to do. Hazel (Blog Session 1) emphasized her need to just be, saying: "I have loved my work, but as I get older, as my parents and some of my friends die, I feel more and more compelled to spend time just being, rather than working, reflecting rather than doing". Emily described this notion of "just being" more fully, acknowledging that after years of productivity, it was time to experience life as it unfolded without guilt:

Rather than plan my days and ask myself what I will do tomorrow, I just let the day unfold. No commitments, no promises that I feel the need to keep, no guilt if I don't do what I planned for the next day the night before. Living one day at a time is easy to say but somewhat hard to do. Once a person has reached that level of thinking and doing life is very satisfying and it's all about how you feel rather than what you do. We have spent years doing in the work place so now we have earned the enjoyment of being and feeling good about it. (Blog Session 3)

However, shifting from a focus on productivity was challenging, even for participants who wished to be less productive. Simon, who retired just prior to the start

of the study, found he needed to justify his leisure by including productive activities. He wrote:

Yesterday I went for a walk, just for the sake of taking a walk. Sure I had a few discretionary errands to fit into to make it purposeful (still finding purposeful important – will that go away?) but the main point was enjoying a walk. (Blog Session 1)

Simon felt better when he was accomplishing something. He described a day where he spent the morning “wasting time” and the afternoon “being productive”:

I did put together a 19 item to do list but spent all morning in a desultory fashion on the computer. The result – boredom and a feeling that I would almost prefer to be back at work. That snapped me back into line. After lunch I put myself on a schedule. I read until 2:00. I went out to look for a blender and located one in a thrift shop for \$8.00....In the course of this hunt I put on my daily goal of 10,000 steps. I spent an hour making flashcards for my daughter’s ASL class while listening to CBC radio and then I made supper. After supper I did some electronic banking and bill paying, chatted on Skype with a friend, reviewed my Italian vocabulary and turned to make my seventh and final (perhaps for now) entry on this blog. I feel much more satisfied with retirement life and myself than I did after a morning [online]. (Blog Session 1)

Simon’s list of accomplishments provided him with more meaning than his lack of productivity earlier in the day.

Some of the tension between being and doing seemed related to a hesitance to shift their focus to the self and to individually defined priorities. Sarah worried that focusing

on her own interests in retirement would conflict with her desire to help others and lead to feelings of selfishness:

As having spent a lot of time giving to my children, and others I hope to be able to relax and enjoy & do what I'd like to in this later stage of my life. (Hopefully without feeling selfish! ...that may be a challenge for me). (Blog Session 1)

Rachel described her focus on being busy after retirement and its impact on well-being. She emphasized having to consciously work towards identifying and incorporating meaningful experiences in her life.

...I am feeling fatigued and too busy with all of the activities that have been going in my retirement. I think perhaps unconsciously I have been creating the same kind of life and "busyness" that I had prior to retirement. I want to change this and be more mindful and discerning about how I spend my time. I do not like the fatigued and busy feeling, so I will need to do more to create activities and relationships that give meaning and fulfillment. It will take some effort for me to say no to some things and be more selective and setting of priorities. (Blog Session 3) Rachel's experience highlights the process of adapting to newfound freedom associated with retirement. Adjusting to retirement was a process and shaping the retirement one wanted required patience, experimentation, and reflection and consideration of past, present, and future behaviors and preferences.

Catherine wrote at length about finding balance between being and doing. Her desire to continue to contribute and maintain responsibility was strong, yet she also prioritized time for herself.

I enjoy planning and accomplishing projects. I enjoy the sense of responsibility to complete... even routine tasks like laundry, grocery shopping, things that I may not say I put

on my retirement to do list but things that I know contribute to the overall good of our household. I do not neglect my own leisure pursuits and pleasures but I do feel I have a healthy sense of balance between living for myself and being a committed volunteer, cheer leader or companion for others. I think I need to know I am part of my community and bringing value to my community. But I will say I do carry the same sense of purposeful living balanced with random, flexible, live for the moment lifestyle. (Blog Session 3)

Tension between being and doing allowed participants to reflect on their desires and hopes for retirement while adjusting to the changes they experienced. It was closely linked to the following subtheme, balancing structure and flexibility.

Balancing structure and flexibility.

While participants negotiated being and doing, they also considered their preferences for structure within their daily lives as well as appreciating the flexibility of retirement. Some participants preferred more structure and others preferred more flexibility, yet many found that achieving an ideal balance of the two helped them embrace retirement more fully. Structure tended to be associated with doing, and provided a sense of accomplishment, whereas having flexibility signaled the freedom inherent in retirement. Prior to retirement, Sarah incorporated her previous experiences of structure and flexibility into her perceptions of an ideal retirement that would include a range of pursuits that allowed for both.

...I find that when I have some items/projects in mind to take care of on the weekend or evening I always feel better after, as compared to when I don't do anything but watch TV and cruise &/or play games on the computer... I think it will be the same when I retire...just more time! Time to waste or fill with meaningful ventures...some

of both I imagine is what I will end up with. Balance and moderation will be my aim.

(Blog Session 1)

Sarah recognized that as her retirement date edged closer, she would prefer having some structure to experience productivity.

I used to say that I was going to just sleep for the first month but I can already tell that I won't do that. I have been thinking about making sure I have some structure in my day so I have a sense of well-being and a sense of accomplishment. It may be easy to get into a trap of sitting around all day and not doing much! LOL... (Blog Session 1)

For Emily, a simple routine in post-retirement life was enough to feel positive about the day ahead.

I force myself everyday to start with a shower even if I am not planning to leave the house right away. This gives me a positive way to start the day and I find I get a lot done afterwards. (Blog Session 1)

At the same time, participants relished the opportunity to be spontaneous in leisure. Post-retirement participants often compared their working life to retirement to highlight the benefits of flexibility, such as recovering from travel without having to go back to work.

Sarah wrote about her more relaxed lifestyle compared to the regimented routine required when working:

I've been... pondering what is my favorite aspect of retirement so far? I don't have just one aspect, I have several. I love staying up late reading or watching a movie and not being a crabby sleepy head at work the next day. Leisurely enjoying morning coffee, outside these days with the nice weather. (Blog Session 3)

Jessica enjoyed that the flexibility of retirement allowed her to slow down and engage with her surroundings.

Everyday now I try to “walk in the park” as often as I can, soaking in the warm sunshine...

While walking these days I can take time to smell the roses and other beautiful flowers, without worrying about rushing home to prepare supper or doing other house chores...

This is what retirement means to me: free time to do what and when I want to do without any pressures. (Blog Session 3)

The flexibility afforded by retirement enabled participants to create structures that were personally satisfying:

Spent the last 2 days babysitting my youngest grandchild. I call it “making memories”. Sure did not have the time to do this when I was working full time! Everything else gets put on hold when I babysit, which is 2 days a week. Went out this evening with our friends for drinks and supper and our weekly visit. Sure is nice to be retired and have evenings free for pleasure, instead of household chores. (Evelyn, Blog Session 2)

The above quote highlights many participants’ preferences for having a routine that did not interfere with opportunities for spontaneity.

Building and renewing connections.

The flexibility provided by retirement enabled participants to spend time with others and rekindle relationships. Participants noted that maintaining friendships had been difficult through child-rearing and working years and they sought to renew and develop friendships in retirement: “I’m hoping to reconnect with some friends (Make a few new I hope)” (Sarah, Blog Session 1). Rosemary lamented the lack of time that she had to pursue friendships and wanted to focus on

socializing so that social connections would be available as she aged: “It seems to me that friends are so important to our leisure and social life as we age. That just confirms that I need to keep up with my socializing, which sometimes gets neglected due to lack of time” (Blog Session 2).

Rachel noted that friendships were not a priority while working and that meant having to work to reconnect with friends during retirement.

I have let many of my friendships slide over the years, not being able to balance all that was on my plate, so I let these relationships go. Not sure that was the wisest decision...but it was the place in my life where there was some “give” now I am in the process of rebuilding and reconnecting as well as being open to new friendships. (Blog Session 1)

While many participants reflected on the desire for building relationships, others described opportunities that retirement had indeed brought to nurture relationships that had positive impacts on well-being. Emily recounted:

I spent several hours visiting an old friend as we ate lunch together. We manage to catch up on each others’ lives once a month or so. Since I am retired and have reconnected with this high school friend I have plenty of time for visiting her. I always come away from these social outings positively charged and ready to meet life head on. My friend always boosts my self-esteem. (Blog Session 1)

Jessica described new friendships she had time to forge post-retirement: “Since I’ve retired about two & a half years ago, I’ve made some new friends. A couple of them have now become my trusted buddies, whom I’ve coffee with quite often” (Blog Session 2). Brian described a recent visit with a close friend that enabled social connection as well as opportunities to pursue leisure interests:

During the past week, I drove out of town to stay with a friend who lives on a farm...

Took my camera along and tried to capture snow blowing across a field and down a highway – harder than I thought. Discussed many of the world's issues with my friend and resolved none. (Blog Session 3)

Retirement was also viewed as a time to connect with family, including parents and grandchildren. Catherine, who retired during data collection, reflected on what having more time to spend with family meant.

Having more energy and time to give to my husband, children and grandchildren; before I would not have been able to help out and babysit during the day (occasionally only, I did tell my family I wouldn't be a regular babysitting service. I enjoy the time I spend with my grandchildren/husband/family but this is the first time in my life I have been able to think about what I'd like to do.) (Blog Session 3)

Not only did having more time help Catherine connect with her family, she also had more energy to do so. However, Catherine was careful to protect her time, wanting opportunities to connect with her family but also consider her personal interests.

Helen used increased leisure time in retirement to connect with several generations at once, bringing her daughter and grandchildren to visit her mother:

Because I spend time with both my grandkids and parents I am happy when I can have fun with them both at the same time. My daughter, grandkids and myself were in a fashion show organized by my parents care home —100 years of fashion and song. (Blog Session 3)

Indeed, leisure activities provided a means of connecting with family members. For many participants adult children were geographically dispersed, coming together for special occasions was valued:

Well, it has been a fun filled and very busy weekend. So nice to have all our kids home for the weekend. Hard to believe our oldest turned 30 this year. Thought it might be fun to have a birthday party like old times with a game of Laser tag. Well we all had soooo much fun we wondered why we don't do that more often. (Helen, Blog Session 1)

Participants described complex experiences of embracing retirement as they negotiated being and doing, as they sought balance between structure and flexibility, and as they developed and nurtured relationships. The nuances of this theme provided context for participants' experiences and behavior as they pursued new and former leisure.

Pursuing New and Former Leisure

Participants engaged in a wide variety of leisure activities, including the arts, physical activity, and new learning. *Rekindling former interests* was common among participants, as was *sustaining current interests*. Yet, participants also *sought out new leisure* activities.

Rekindling former interests.

A desire to return to former leisure activities was frequently reported. Activities that were dropped due to lack of time in early and midlife once again became feasible. Sarah reengaged in previous leisure activities in preparation for retirement: "...I have started to get interest again in previous pursuits I used to enjoy but haven't had the time (or energy) for. I have even taken a few of them up again. I am getting involved in art again." (Blog Session 1). Similarly, Brian returned to activities that nourished his long-held interests in visual art and contributed to learning:

My photography interests have resurfaced again – as has the interest in the visual arts. I was looking at the works of Georgia O'Keeffe recently, really quite astounding the work

she produced in almost 100 years of life. I have purchased some books lately, I should catch up on contemporary thought. (Blog Session 2)

Although retirement was viewed as a time for rekindling these interests, it often required exploration and developing rusty leisure skills:

I got my skates sharpened last week and plan to go skating tomorrow, that should be interesting, and hopefully fun. I haven't skated for maybe 7-8 years. Used to really love it as a child and did a lot in the small town where I grew up, but since our kids have grown up, it kinda got left behind too. Retirement seems to spark re-trying tried and true things you love(d) to do and trying new things. A time of exploration. (Rachel, Blog Session 1)

Post-retirement participants also wrote about returning to previous activities that led to feelings of joy and a sense of adventure: "Just finished aqua size. Been years since i[sic] did that but found it to be so much fun" (Maude, Blog Session 3). Participants who described returning to previous leisure activities were able to do so because of an increase in time and/or financial resources with retirement.

Sustaining current leisure.

In addition to rekindling former interests, participants continued to engage in their current leisure pursuits. Participants wished to maintain or increase time spent doing leisure they already found meaningful. For example, Hazel anticipated engaging in the same types of meaningful leisure she pursued before retirement, as well as returning to former leisure:

...the things that give me a quiet sense of who I am (besides my job), things that work my hands and my creativity, are getting me through this difficult time. These

will be the same things I will do when I retire – knit, quilt, write. Except when I retire I hope to go back to playing the piano. (Hazel, Blog Session 1)

Many participants specifically prioritized maintaining engagement in physical activity. For example, instead of adding new activities, Catherine combined her desire to be physically active and her desire to be social by reorganizing her current leisure activities:

Since I had time to plan for my transition, I am not searching out new activities but rather re-configuring my priorities with current/existing interests. I continued to play golf, take yoga and continue with matinee curling. All these activities are my way of combining my social time with some physical activity. (Blog 1)

Similarly, Patty intended to maintain her current leisure interests rather than adding new activities, and anticipated having more time to spend on those activities: “My leisure won’t change in the things that I do, it will just be more. More walks, more hours at CrossFit, more reading. And travel. One trip a year or maybe two” (Blog Session 3).

After retirement, Simon had more time to read the newspaper:

Instead of getting through bits and pieces of the morning paper over that morning cup of coffee, I take the time to go through the whole thing reading anything of interest. This usually takes about an hour compared to the 15 to 20 minutes that I was able to allow myself when I was working. (Blog Session 2)

Sustaining engagement in leisure activities provided a sense of continuity during a time of change and was often motivated by a desire to maintain or increase the benefits of activities that they valued for stress coping and general well-being.

Seeking new leisure.

Many participants also took up new activities and hobbies now that they had time and were seeking out new opportunities. In some cases, new activities were related to lifelong interests that had not yet been explored: “Astronomy is a hobby I took up right after retirement. I have always been interested in the science and physics of astronomy but am now really taken back with star gazing” (David, Blog Session 1). In other cases, activities seemed unrelated to previous interests, but trying one new activity led to a desire to try similar activities: “I have started dabbling in writing. I try to write on a certain topic every week...in the hopes that I will compile these into a book. I’d like to try my hand at poetry” (Emily, Blog Session 1). Participants’ adoption of new activities in retirement was often facilitated by increased available time, increased discretionary income, and increased energy due to reduced work stress.

New activities emerged as participants took advantage of opportunities within the community. Several participants started taking courses at a continuing education center and one participant found she had the means to begin going to the theatre:

My husband and I got season tickets for the [theatre] this year. So far we are enjoying it very much. We will probably do this again next year. We paid off some debts and have the funds to do that now. (Melissa, Blog Session 1)

Rachel had recently joined a local choir with her husband: “My husband and I joined [the choir] last year and have been singing and performing with them since... There are many strong singers to help carry us, who are less skilled and knowledgeable, we do enjoy it” (Blog Session 1). Both of these arts-related activities were available to participants due to increased money or increased time, as well as a desire to connect with a spouse.

New activities provided enjoyment along with opportunities to meet new people. Amy took up dancing to increase physical activity in a supportive environment: “...my new-found

activity of Irish Step Dancing is fabulous, a good work out, good laughs, and people are very supportive as I learn” (Blog Session 1). Some participants were motivated to try new activities to take advantage of opportunities while they existed: “Take advantage of life while you are in your 60s. Don’t put off that special trip or experience until later as you might not well be able to do it”. (Simon, Blog Session 2).

While most participants saw retirement as an opportunity to engage in leisure, return to former activities and try something new, identifying and engaging in meaningful activities was challenging for some. Financial planning often took priority over planning for other retirement changes. Brian struggled to find leisure activities that provided a sense of meaning or motivation. Although he could identify leisure interests, he found it difficult to find opportunities that met those interests:

One of the challenges of my transition to retirement is an absence of leisure activities. I have tried some recreational exercise sessions, but I likely should join a gym or the YMCA to get any real benefits. I hope to merge the desire to travel and the interests I have in photography and anthropology. (Blog Session 3)

While most participants actively sought out leisure pursuits, a small number struggled to find meaning in leisure. Brian questioned whether he should return to work: “I would like some sort of ‘work’ for a few hours a week. I’ve investigated the idea of starting a consulting business, or reinventing some interest into some part-time ‘work’. It’s been a challenge some weeks to occupy my time” (Blog Session 2).

The process of identifying, exploring, and engaging in new and former leisure activities occurred across all participants. This process involved identification of potential leisure interests and then making the effort to engage in those activities. Pre-

retirement participants, rekindling former interests and seeking out new leisure activities often occurred in preparation for increased free time and instilled excitement about retirement. Retired participants similarly considered a variety of leisure options once they had the flexibility to do so after leaving the workforce.

Discussion

We followed baby boomers transitioning to retirement to better understand leisure innovation within the context of their lives. Participants sought a balance of time for themselves to relax and enjoy simply being and time allocated for what they deemed as productive activities. They valued the flexibility that retirement afforded to engage in leisure spontaneously while also seeking out some routine. Most participants embraced the transition to retirement as a time to rebuild personal friendships and to engage with family. Participants sought out a wide range of leisure activities as they rekindled former interests and added new activities to their leisure repertoires through the transition to retirement.

The Relevance of Leisure Innovation

Our findings lend support to the theory of leisure innovation. Innovation theory provides a positive perspective of later life as a time of growth and opportunity (Nimrod, 2008). Participants viewed retirement as an exciting time to explore interests outside of work. These activities further enabled social connections and contributed to a sense of well-being and joy among participants. Similar to Liechty et al.'s findings (2012), leisure innovation was not limited to participants who had already retired. Participants added new activities before retiring to prepare for the increased time once retirement arrived.

Further, our findings support the four tenets of innovation theory (Nimrod, 2008) (See Table 2). The first tenet suggests that innovation is largely intrinsically motivated. Our participants were motivated by a desire for maintaining or improving physical well-being, self-expression, creativity, and connecting with others. Similar to previous research, innovation was triggered by having increased time, increased financial means, and the availability of the activities within the community (Campbell & Yang, 2011; Liechty et al., 2012).

The second and third tenets of innovation theory focus on types of innovation. Consistent with previous research, self-preservation innovation was more common among participants than self-reinvention innovation (Nimrod, 2016). Participants tended toward new leisure activities that were consistent with previous interests. For example, participants interested in physical activity tended to adopt new types of physical activity. Likewise, those with lifelong interests in the arts and creative expression tended to add similar activities. Rather than redefining oneself, leisure innovation was focused on new ways of approaching long-standing interests. In support of the fourth tenet, participants identified ways that their leisure contributed to well-being, such as relaxation, sense of accomplishment, development of social relationships, and learning. In particular, the current findings suggested that adopting new leisure activities provided a space for making new friends and re-kindling old relationships, which contributed to social well-being.

Insert table 2 here

Because we followed participants over the course of the year, we could better understand the process of leisure innovation and the transition to retirement. Leisure innovation was not automatic. Instead, it played into participants' decision making for their retirement years, and required consideration of leisure preferences and available resources (e.g., financial means,

community resources). It then involved exploration and experimentation with new activities or changes to previous activities over time. These decisions were not made quickly; participants desired time to adjust to retirement and consider their wishes for this phase.

Personal and contextual factors of leisure innovation.

Research has suggested that innovation may depend on personal and contextual factors (Nimrod, 2016). The current findings provide insight into these factors that play in the process of leisure innovation. The themes of being and doing and structure and flexibility highlighted tensions related to feeling the need for productive activities versus a desire to let one's day unfold without pressures to do anything in particular. These tensions may contribute to the desire to innovate in leisure – the increased time resulting from retirement allowed participants the luxury of considering their preferences for being and doing. New leisure activities could help fulfill the desire for both structure/productivity, and flexibility/being. For example, Simon began learning a new language after retirement which contributed to a sense of accomplishment and well-being, particularly after “wasting time.” In contrast, Emily was content to take time for herself and minimized guilt if she had not accomplished a great deal. Both participants added several new leisure activities which served their purposes to either do or be.

Activities.

The findings also provide insight into the process of innovation by highlighting participants' experiences with various types of leisure activities and the value judgements associated with them. Dionigi (2017) cautions leisure researchers against a focus on being active to take responsibility for one's own health at the expense of other types of leisure pursuits. While Dionigi's (2017) work referred specifically to Masters athletes, some of our participants also focused on being active and busy. In this study, Rachel struggled with feeling a need to

maintain a busy, active lifestyle when she retired, yet acknowledged that this approach could have negative implications. The findings may reflect the “busy ethic”, which suggests that busyness in retirement is both desirable and a moral imperative, compelling retirees to engage in activity, regardless of whether those activities are meaningful (Katz, 2005). Many participants in this study struggled with the need to be busy even when they wished to relax, suggesting that the busy ethic may have influenced their perceptions about what one “should” do in retirement.

Time.

Breheny and Stephens’ (2017) discourse analysis demonstrated that many older adults emphasized the importance of using time productively, reflecting active aging policies that encourage older adults to take responsibility for their health and well-being. Productive time referred to activities focused on improving or maintaining health, or time spent volunteering or otherwise contributing to society. Yet they also sought out personal time, which was described as time for activities enjoyed for their own sake (e.g. reading). Like our participants, Breheny and Stephens found older adults engaged in both types of time use.

Fortunately, diverse leisure pursuits exist that allow for experiencing the benefits of “productive” leisure activities that lead to feelings of accomplishment, combined with leisure activities that support reflection, contemplation and relaxation. This may suggest an additional tenet to innovation theory, contributing to its further refinement. This possible tenet may suggest that leisure innovation involves a process by which older adults seek out and identify their ideal mix of flexible and structured opportunities. This process may support leisure innovation, while leisure innovation, in turn, may help individuals to find their ideal combination within the transition to retirement. However, further exploration is needed.

Leisure Innovation as a Complement to Other Theories

Leisure innovation focuses on the addition of new leisure activities but does not consider how new activities are pursued in addition to former and current activities. While retirement may serve as a catalyst to try new things, it also allows flexibility to spend more time in long held interests. Our findings suggest that baby boomers seek to engage in former and current leisure activities as well as new ones, and do not depend solely on innovation for leisure. All three approaches to leisure engagement appeared to contribute to self-preservation and all appeared to have similar motivations and triggers. This suggests that leisure innovation may complement existing theories of aging (rather than compete or replace). In particular, the findings support continuity theory which holds that as people age, they continue with the same patterns as they did in earlier life (Atchley, 1989). Continuity theory complements self-preservation innovation, in particular, as the desire to maintain similar interests across the lifespan is consistent with the notion of self-preservation.

Tornstam's (2005) theory of gerotranscendence may also be used concomitantly with leisure innovation. Gerotranscendence argues that older adults seek out fewer material goods and instead focus on reflection, reminiscence, and intergenerational relationships. The findings of the current study highlight the importance of intergenerational relationships and the retirement transition provided an opportunity to nurture these relationships through leisure. The desire to "be" reflects Tornstam's argument of shifting priorities in later life. The selection of new leisure activities that support this type of contemplation is worth further consideration.

Implications for Future Research

Further research is needed to continue to refine leisure innovation theory and to better understand its relevance for diverse older adults. Dionigi and Son (2017) argue that today's older adults are redefining aging and thus we need to understand their diverse range of leisure.

Innovation theory may provide one means of doing so. As this theory continues to be refined, additional research is needed to understand connections between innovation and well-being, contextual factors that facilitate innovation, and experiences of non-innovators. Further, in the current study additional insight was available due to following participants over time. Future research should continue a longitudinal approach including multi-year periods.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide insight into leisure innovation and experiences of leisure in later life. Participants viewed retirement as a new life stage with unique opportunities and challenges rather than a time of decline. This perspective, combined with the flexibility offered by retirement may facilitate leisure innovation for baby boomers. The findings also indicate that leisure during the transition to retirement involves a complex process of experimentation with new activities, different approaches, and shifting priorities. This suggests that innovation develops over time. Furthermore, the findings provide context for understanding the process of leisure innovation. Behaviors related to sustaining old activities and seeking new ones were depicted within a context that included adjusting to increased free time, consideration of available resources, developing new routines, and shifting priorities toward social relationships. Understanding the context of this life transition is key to understanding retirees' experiences, needs, and behaviors.

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