

Ethnicity and Leisure in Later Life

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Introduction

The positive relationship between leisure activities and health among older adults continues to find much support in recent research and to generate popular interest as well as more empirical investigation (Benjamins, 2004; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2005).

Of a variety of measures of leisure activities, leisure activities are most solidly linked with physical and functional health indices in later life. The mechanisms by which health is positively affected by leisure activities are unclear; however, several explanations have been considered including: formation of good health habits encouraged by leisure activities, reduction of stress from working, and the benefits of social support and connectedness to a community with common values.

With the call to more fully explicate the theoretical basis for the leisure activities and health connection to life satisfaction, the present study used a social capital perspective as a lens with which to consider the impact of leisure activities and health on life satisfaction in later life.

Leisure can often be undervalued as a coping strategy, but it can have substantial ameliorative effects (Stevens-Ratchford & Krause, 2004). Individuals who engage in more leisure activities are likely to be less isolated (Lennartsson & Silverstein, 2001). Engagement in leisure is positively related to life satisfaction (Jang, Mortimer, Haley, & Graves, 2004) and physical health (Pagano, Barkhoff, Heiby, & Schlicht, 2006).

Social capital theory, heavily based on earlier sociological premises, is useful in considering the involvement and participation of individuals in groups or social structures which create positive (or negative) resources for the individual and the greater community. Social capital is the "ability to secure benefits through membership in social networks or other social structures" (p. 5); benefits which are intangible and emerge out of activity in a relationships or social structures.

The present study sought to examine the influence of leisure activities to older adults on self-reported frequency of leisure activities for a representative sample of community dwelling older adults using a social capital perspective.

Research Question

Thus, the present study addressed the following research question:

Are there ethnic differences between Anglo older adults and minority older adults in the frequency of engaging in leisure activities?

Method

Sample: Secondary data analysis derived from AARP telephone survey (Montenegro, 2013).

Age: adults age 60-69 ($n=3005$)

Sex: (1203 male, 1802 female)

Measures:

Leisure activities were assessed via single item questions on frequency of leisure behaviors (1="never", 4="often").

Sample item: "For each of these activities, please check whether it is something you do often, occasionally, not very often, or never".

Self-identified race was measured as a nominal level of measurement (e.g., 1="White/Caucasian", 2="Black/African American", 3="Hispanic or non-Black", 4="Other").

Results

To address the research question, a MANOVA was conducted. The MANOVA revealed a significant main effect; there were leisure activities differences between the ethnic groups.

Univariate follow-up tests revealed that the Anglo older adults report higher frequency of leisure activities than minority older adults .

Conclusion

Older adults' ethnicity after their retirement was related to their leisure activities in the current study. First, Anglo older adults reported higher score in spend time on all areas.

It is understandable that older adults who have higher social capital resources has less regular income that they can use, and they have can enjoy on their current resources.

In addition, minority older adults reported lower scores of leisure activities than retired Anglo older adults. There are similar previous findings in which older adults leisure activities engagement is related to older adults' socioeconomic status, such as health and income (e.g., Antonucci, 1985; Fischer, 1982). It is understandable that older adults who have higher social capital resources, such as income and health, has higher resources they can use on leisure activities than minority older adults. This result support the Social Capital Theory.

Although previous studies indicate that income is related to family and health care networks, the current findings indicate that ethnicity itself is associated with frequency of the older adults' leisure activities.

Consistently, Antonucci (1985) and Fischer (1982) measured older adults' life satisfaction in which older adults who had a higher income level reported a higher quality of social relationships, health care, and other life events.

Further research is needed to clarify demographic differences (e.g., education, income) and leisure activities among older adults. In addition, research can identify resources (e.g., time), limitations and benefits of financial associated with older adults.

Table 1. Mean Differences on Leisure Activities Between Ethnic Groups.

Activities	Minority Group	Anglo	F value
Spend time on Shopping	1.65	1.88	4.44*
Spend time on Exercise	1.89	1.84	.05***
Spend time on Hobbies	2.16	2.50	2.80**
Spend time on Travel	1.89	2.57	12.85**
Spend time on Education	1.50	1.54	13.18**
Spend time on Socialization	2.50	2.19	2.98*
Spend time on Religious Activity	2.69	1.91	7.23**
Spend time on Family	2.64	2.45	.03*

Note. *p < .05, ** p < .01