

Diverse Stories: Understanding Recreation and Leisure in Older LGB Lives

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## **Abstract**

Research shows that recreation and leisure can encourage health-promoting behaviours and positive outcomes for older adults (Massie & Meisner, 2019). However, studies report that older LGB adults have unique experiences of recreation and leisure and experience different constraints to their participation, often influenced by experiences of marginalization and prejudice (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017c). Though research suggests that recreation, leisure, and community support are key to positive health outcomes, the reality is that older LGB adults may fear the service systems that have historically discriminated against them (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014). Therefore, this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) How do older LGB adults continue their recreation and leisure participation throughout their life course?, and (2) What role does community-based recreation services play in supporting recreation participation among older LGB adults? Narrative inquiry methodology was used to explore these questions, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with older LGB adults and practitioners to collect data. Thematic narrative analysis and thematic analysis were used to create a coherent story of participants experiences, to identify patterns and relationships within and across stories (Kim, 2019) and illustrate how older LGB participants storied, lived experiences integrated with perspectives of the practitioners who serve the population. Continuity Theory and the Model of Leisure Constraints were used to understand how the older LGB adults' recreation and leisure participation continued throughout their life course and the constraints that influenced the continuity of such. The analysis identified three key themes: Adaptation of leisure engagement, Social network augmentation, and Consolidation of interests, values, and leisure. This research highlights how older LGB adults' leisure engagement is influenced by various constraints related to their identity, both as a sexual minority and as an older adult. Moreover, the findings of this study point to the importance of considering how these needs change and evolve throughout their

life course, in order to achieve inclusivity for older LGB adults. Further, this research draws attention to how recreation service providers can intentionally foster opportunities to fulfill identified needs, such as socialization and sense of belonging, while helping to achieve continuity in activities, relationships, and/or environments.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Purpose Statement**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century will see the most rapid rate of population aging ever witnessed (United Nations, 2020). Research shows that approximately 17% of the Canadian population consists of individuals who are 65+ years of age (Freedman & Nicolle, 2020). The growth rate of the older adult population is approximately four times that of the average population, estimating the population will double by 2041 (Laher, 2017). This growth has illuminated the need to ensure that public services, facilities, policy, and practices are developed to support this growing cohort and enable them to stay active and healthy (Gregory & Dimmock, 2019).

There are various international initiatives that have been developed to prioritize healthy aging (World Health Organization, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) defines healthy aging as “the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age” (p. 8). For the purposes of this study, older adults can be defined as individuals who are 60+ years old (WHO, 2020a). Many public health efforts continue to mirror these initiatives, seeking to develop and implement strategies that optimize the health and wellbeing of older adults (Massie & Meisner, 2019).

The meaning of leisure is a widely contested term, which has never held a static definition. More contemporary understandings of leisure are often divided into key themes, that help to broadly categorize and guide modern understandings (Russell, 2017). Two of the most common themes used to define leisure are leisure as free time, and leisure as recreational activity. These guiding parameters then define leisure as participation in nonwork, recreational activities that are sought out in time that is free from obligation (Russell, 2017). This conceptualization of leisure subsequently guides the framework and discussion of this study.



Leisure is suggested to have the potential to provide individuals with a holistic experience of self, in ways that are not always attainable in other contexts (Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998). In accordance with calls to optimize the health and wellbeing of older adults, many practitioners have drawn on leisure (from informal programming to serious engagements) as they are shown to encourage health-promoting behaviours and positive outcomes for older adults (Hutchinson et al., 2008; Mock & Hummel, 2012). For example, leisure spaces often provide the opportunity for social interaction, which studies show is important for achieving life satisfaction among older adults (Provencher & Poulin, 2020), and promoting healthy aging (Gough et al., 2021). Additionally, research suggests that understanding older adults' perceptions of leisure and the role that leisure plays in their lives is crucial for creating programs and policy that meet the needs of the rapidly aging population (Yoon et al., 2021).

Further, there is a growing interest in understanding healthy aging across diverse identities, particularly diverse sexual and gender identities. Research continues to highlight the prevalence of health disparities among older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) adults, such as those related to poor mental and physical health (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017c). More specifically, older LGBT individuals experience higher rates of prejudice and discrimination – experiences that have been found to have a direct correlation to health outcomes in later life (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010; Kim et al., 2017). In Canada, sexual and gender minorities were historically at risk of being pathologized. It was not until Bill C-150 was passed in 1969, that homosexuality was removed from the Canadian Criminal Code (Brotman et al., 2015). Despite several advances in social policy, the prevalence of bias in health and social care systems continues to trivialize the complexities involved in the life experiences of LGBT individuals (Brotman et al., 2015). As well, there are various challenges involved in

understanding the realities of aging LGB adults. Throughout their lives, older LGBT adults have to navigate contexts and services that privilege heteronormativity and cisnormativity, marginalizing them from ‘mainstream’ activities (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010).

More specifically, researchers categorize the older LGB participants of this study as part of the ‘pride’ generation, who were part of the modern gay rights movements (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017). So, although research suggests that community support is key to positive health outcomes, the reality is that older LGBT adults may fear the service systems that have historically discriminated against them (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010). This leaves many older LGBT adults feeling distrustful of and continuing to expect marginalization across public services (Boule et al., 2020). These expectations and prevalence of distrust among this population often results in “self-imposed exclusion and isolation” (Harley & Teaster, 2016, p. 570). As such, themes of invisibility and silencing continue to inform older LGB adults’ experiences of aging.

Existing literature highlights how health-promoting resources can be a useful tool to consider, and further understand, the impact of cumulative risk and resources on health outcomes. Such influences are especially relevant when developing responsive, effective interventions that seek to promote health outcomes (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to understand older LGB adults’ experiences and perspectives of the constraints that influence their leisure participation and the role that community-based recreation and leisure services have in supporting participation throughout the lifespan, specifically as LGB adults age. For the purposes of this research, community-based recreation and leisure services can be defined as publicly accessible facilities and programs (i.e., drop-in, unstructured, and structured) provided by public and non-profit organizations.

While research illustrates the benefits and positive potential of recreation and leisure services for older adults, there is little known about how older LGB adults navigate their participation in mainstream (i.e., not LGBT+ focused), community-based recreation services. There is also a lack of literature regarding best practices when it comes to providing affirmative, inclusive services to older LGB adults. As such, this project was designed to help advance our understanding of older LGB adults' experiences with, and perceptions of, recreation and leisure services, with specific focus on the constraints that influence their participation.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this research was to understand older LGB adults' experiences and perspectives of the constraints that influence their leisure participation in community-based recreation and leisure, and the role that community-based recreation and leisure services have in supporting participation throughout the lifespan. More specifically, this research answers the following questions:

(1) How do older LGB adults continue their recreation and leisure participation throughout their life course?

(2) What role does community-based recreation services play in supporting recreation participation among older LGB adults?

In order to gain an understanding of older LGB adults' perspectives and experiences, this study utilized narrative inquiry to collect personal narratives, that portrayed participants' lived experiences integrated with the meanings associated with their life events (Hammock & Cohler, 2009). Continuity theory, the theoretical framework of this study, was used to understand how older LGB adults continued their recreation and leisure participation by seeking to understand

the internal frameworks (e.g., personal goals, beliefs, attitudes, and values) that were used to organize and interpret their experiences and other external patterns (e.g., lifestyle, social networks and relationships, activity profiles, Atchley, 1999). The narratives of participants provided insight into how internal frameworks and subsequent developmental goals (i.e., aspirations about oneself, future activities, relationships) influenced the selective investments they made regarding which parts of themselves to focus on, activities to partake in, and connections to make (Atchley, 1999). The leisure constraints model (Crawford et al., 1991), was also used to help understand the constraints that were described by older LGB adults and how these constraints influenced the strategies that older LGB adults used to maintain continuity in their recreation and leisure pursuits. Thus, the findings and discussion of this study illustrate that older LGB participants have experienced lives of resilience and adaptation to achieve continuity in their participation in recreation and leisure pursuits.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This section will provide an overview of pertinent literature to contextualize older LGB adults' experiences of aging, recreation, and leisure. To begin, aging research is used to highlight how recreation and leisure can promote wellbeing for older LGB adults. Then, specific constraints that can impact older LGB adults' participation and engagement in recreation and leisure are explored. Subsequently, the provision of community-based recreation and leisure in Canada, including both public community centres and seniors' centres, is examined.

The use of acronyms representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer identities (i.e., LGBTQ and its variations, such as, LGBT, LGBTQ+, etc.) throughout this paper has been deliberately employed to make accurate references to the identities represented in the work that being is cited. Further, specific references to and use of the acronym LGB has been intentionally employed to accurately refer to the identities (lesbian, gay and bisexual) represented in this study, and to avoid misrepresentation of the findings and implications of this work. It should be acknowledged that any other association(s) with the acronym LGB, specifically those of anti-trans lobbying groups such as LGB Alliance (LGB Alliance, 2020), are not referenced in this paper, nor does this study seek to promote the discrimination against or exclusion of trans people.

### **Older LGB Adults and Aging**

For centuries, humans have been interested in prolonging life and improving the process of aging. For example, Ancient Romans believed that aging was a disease, and many spent their time searching for a 'cure', in hopes to discover the key to eternal life (Aiken, 1995). Although present day ideals of aging have shifted, many researchers and practitioners are actively trying to

enhance how humans experience aging. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the science and profession of gerontology grew out of a surge in efforts to understand aging from sociological and psychological perspectives (Aiken, 1995; Kart, 1990). During this time, there were various changes to the world's populations, including increased life expectancy, which led to more aging populations (Kart, 1990). Today, the field of gerontology is a discipline that is dedicated to enhancing the health and well-being of older individuals. Known as an interdisciplinary field, gerontology seeks to understand the psychological, biological, sociological, and economic factors that influence old age (Aiken, 1995). Gerontologists recognize that biological, social, and psychological processes of aging are interconnected (Foner, 1986). Especially in modern societies, old age is associated with many changes in social roles, activities, and social networks (Foner, 1986). Thus, many scholars are interested in the issues that arise as individuals' age, such as maintaining one's status, role loss and transition, and relations among generations (Kart, 1990).

There has been an increasing interest in gerontology to understand the aging experiences and needs of older LGB adults. Depending on their age, very specific historical contexts lead to varying constraints and opportunities for LGBT individuals (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010). For example, scholars identified three distinct generations that comprise the LGBT older adult population. The oldest generation, the 'invisible generation', are those who came of age in the era of the Great Depression and during the Second World War, when the identities of LGBT peoples were not discussed or disclosed (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017). The second generation, known as the 'silenced generation', are the individuals who came of age in the late 1940s and into the 1950s. At this time, homosexuality was criminalized and feared (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017). Finally, the third generation, the 'pride generation,' is comprised of

individuals who were part of the movements of 1960s and into the 1970s that would become to be known as the modern gay rights movement. Each of these cohorts were witness to significant changes in both society and public policy, although each generation experienced these events at varying stages in their lives (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017).

Further, older LGBT adults can be understood as individuals with two (or more) subordinate identities, as they are older adults with diverse sexual and gender identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Scholars' term this as 'double-jeopardy', to emphasize the cumulative disadvantage imposed on individuals with multiple marginalized identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Roe & Galvin, 2020). Research shows that the presence of multiple devalued identities exposes individuals to distinctive oppressions that are associated with each subordinate identity combined (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). As a result, many academics are interested in gaining a better understanding of the complexities involved in diverse aging, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of this population (Laher, 2017).

### **Leisure and Aging**

Alongside gerontologists, leisure scholars are interested in and commonly study the effect of aging on leisure behaviours (Russell, 2017). During the 1960s to 1970s, scholars began to explore the relationship between leisure and aging (Best, 2010). Many academics utilized activity theory, disengagement theory, and continuity theory as the basis for investigations seeking to understand leisure's relationship with successful aging. More current research highlights a relationship between an increase in age and a loss of social contacts, often resulting in experiences of loneliness and social isolation (Toepoel, 2013). For example, Toepoel (2013) sought to understand the relationship between various leisure activities, social connectedness variables, and close social contacts across four age groups. The quantitative study was comprised

of 2018 participants between the ages of 55 and 75+, the largest group between the ages of 55 and 64 (1171 participants). Toepoel (2013) concluded that older adults have fewer social gatherings and close contacts, and experience feelings of loneliness more frequently, compared to those of the 18 to 54 age group (3892 participants). As such, many public health initiatives for older adults are specifically focused on reducing social isolation, social vulnerability, and loneliness through prevention and intervention (Mock & Hummel, 2012). Based on this, some aging scholars suggest that participation in recreational opportunities is an effective resource for promoting health among older adult populations because of the social participation it affords (Provencher & Carbonneau, 2019).

An important part of healthy aging is successfully navigating retirement. Retirement is considered a life stage that can be a difficult period of transition (Carbonneau et al., 2020). For many individuals, the end of work results in feelings such as a loss of usefulness or reduced meaning in life and can negatively impact their potential for healthy aging. Researchers also reported key constraints to physical activity participation in older adults, such as perceptions of aging, experiences of ageism, and internalized beliefs about stereotypes of aging (Massie & Meisner, 2019). Massie and Meisner (2019) interviewed 15 Canadian older adults between the ages of 60 to 74 and found that negative, devalued perceptions of older adults negatively impacted their self-esteem and life satisfaction. This influenced how individuals perceive their own abilities, leading to altered, often diminished preferences and participation among older adults (Massie & Meisner, 2019).

As such, there are numerous benefits that are associated with recreation participation among older adults, including increased physical and mental health, diversification and expansion of social networks, alleviation of stress, and enhanced sense of empowerment (Boule et al., 2020;



Hutchinson et al., 2008; Iwaski & Ristock, 2004; Kim et al., 2017; Mock & Hummel, 2012).

These benefits can be attained for the general population as well as individuals with marginalized identities.

### ***Social Connectedness***

Social networks can be understood as the social relationships one has with the set of individuals, that they have repeated interactions and involvement with, such as family, friends, and acquaintances (Wrzus et al., 2013). These networks act as channels for the sharing of resources, support, information, social norms and more between actors in a given network (Alwin et al., 2018). Social networks can be understood and characterized by a variety of factors, such as network density, network centrality, and more (Alwin et al., 2018). These characteristics of social networks and the activities that influence one's social network are often used to understand social connectedness.

Social connectedness can be defined as the amount and quality of social relationships held by older people (Toepoel, 2013). Scholars reported an increased risk of social isolation and loss of social contacts as individuals age, which highlights the significant role leisure can play in promoting social connectedness. However, participation in recreational activities during one's leisure time often provides individuals with other opportunities to interact socially (Yoon et al., 2021). Many recreational activities, such as hobbies, cultural activities, and voluntary work, are linked to feelings of social connectedness, highlighting how participation in leisure activities thus can be understood as an effective tool to reducing social isolation among older adults (Toepoel, 2013). Many researchers outlined how community resources and activities can be an important source of meaningful engagement and social interaction for older adults (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014; Gough et al., 2021; Hutchinson & Gallant, 2016). For example, Hutchinson and

Gallant (2016) conducted a community-based participatory study that examined social and physical factors of a small Canadian senior centre and the ways such factors can implicate and/or undermine aging in place. The eight participants were ‘regular’ members at the centre, with ages ranging between early 60s and early 80s. The study found that the centre provided participants with feelings of community, and the routines within the centre provided a sense of continuity, and connectedness. The authors found that members reported meaningful engagement when given opportunities for self-directed or independent activities, and opportunities to exercise control and self-determination. Karaoke was one activity that specifically was found to provide members with meaningful engagement, as they were able to participate regardless of cognitive ability, physical ability, or musical talent (Hutchinson & Gallant, 2016).

Social connectedness can be both a cause and effect of participation in recreational activities, simultaneously (Toepoel, 2013). Recreational participation has been found to counteract increasing levels of social isolation. More specifically, voluntary work was the best predictor of feelings of social integration and decreased feelings of loneliness for people aged 55 to 64, and cultural activities, and sports, radio and reading contributed to decreased feelings of loneliness for people aged 55 to 64 and 75+ (Toepoel, 2013). Further, researchers reported that increased leisure time offered opportunities to experience new social interactions with new and/or familiar individuals, a sense of community and belonging, and social connection more generally (Freire, 2013). This can be especially important for older LGB adults, as interacting with similar others specifically helps to increase perceptions of social support (Mock & Hummel, 2012).

### ***Well-being and Quality of Life***

Researchers reported that leisure time activities may have more influence on individuals’ quality of life than any other behaviours or experiences (Liu & Da, 2020). Participation in

recreation and leisure activities, such as volunteering, gardening, and travel have been found to be significantly associated with older adults' quality of life (Cho et al., 2017; Yoon et al., 2021). Cho and colleagues (2017) found that engagement in such active activities (i.e., activities involving physical movement) was associated with life satisfaction, whereas engagement in passive activities (e.g., watching television, reading) had negative to no association with individuals' life satisfaction, for 460 American older adults aged 60 to 90. Yoon and colleagues (2021), further reported that participation and meaningful engagement in leisure activities provided Korean older adults (aged 65+) with perceptions of the benefit of social engagement and promoted quality of life, thus resulting in increased life satisfaction and ability to age well in older adults.

As well, researchers highlight that the availability of community-based services, such as recreational programming, can encourage independence in older adults (Lan Fang et al., 2016). The structure that is fostered through daily recreation and leisure participation created a sense of stability that allows older adults to live well in their own environments. This stability allowed older adults to develop personal strategies that promote their health and wellbeing, such as motivation to attend daily activities (Lund & Engelsrud, 2008). Finally, opportunities for recreation and leisure have been shown to be associated with good health, including active engagement and camaraderie (Hutchinson & Gallant, 2016). Researchers found that sense of belonging and other aspects of comradeship also played a role in promoting independence in their existing community (Hutchinson & Gallant, 2016; Lan Fang et al., 2016; Lund & Engelsrud, 2008). These outcomes can be especially important for older LGB adults, as researchers show that sense of membership and belonging is positively linked to mental health

and can encourage positive health behaviours in older LGBT adults (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017c).

### **Constraints to Leisure**

Literature suggests that marginalized groups have unique experiences of leisure and as a result, experience different constraints to their leisure participation (Barbosa & Liechty, 2018). More specifically, research has found that the leisure of LGBTQ individuals is constrained by a fear of encountering homophobia. This fear impacts how they use leisure to help support identity development, build a sense of community, and create social networks of support (Barbosa & Liechty, 2018). Researchers have found that sexual minorities seek out specific spaces that they feel are safe from homophobia and/or promote positive messages about homosexuality (Barbosa & Liechty, 2018; McGovern et al., 2016; Mock & Hummel, 2012). Additionally, researchers reported that older adults experienced specific constraints to recreation and leisure later in life that limits their pursuits, and impacts their leisure preferences, motivation, in turn reducing the potential benefits, and meaning of leisure participation (Massie & Meisner, 2019).

Studies suggested that intrapersonal constraints posed more difficulty to overcome, whereas structural constraints were less likely to impede on participation in any given activity (Alexandris et al., 2003). More specifically, Alexandris and colleagues (2003) studied 125 physically active older adults (who were aged 60+) in Greece and reported that intrapersonal constraints were largely responsible for participants' low participation levels, and negatively impacted their intention to continue participation. Additionally, Yoon et al. (2021) suggested that the lack of knowledge regarding leisure and leisure engagement directly impacts the participation and positive impact of participation for older adults.

### *Aged-related Constraints*

Western society typically loses interest in the civic participation of aging people and provides no new responsibilities for older adults (Atchley, 1999). Massie and Meisner (2019) highlighted two prominent barriers that impede older adults' leisure participation. These include perceptions of aging and experiences of ageism, which characterize common stereotypes of older adults. Ageism can be defined as the "process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination" against people based on their age, which can be expressed at all levels of social activity (Butler, 2008, p. 25). In Western societies, negative beliefs and stereotypes of older adults are more common and have a direct impact on their motivation, preferences, participation, and impact of leisure participation (Massie & Meisner, 2019). Ageist beliefs further impact the benefits of older adults' participation in recreation and leisure. Researchers highlighted how ageism, specifically, can negatively impact older adults' sense of belonging in community leisure spaces (Fortune et al., 2021).

Similarly, Cho et al. (2017) acknowledged that the prevalence of older adults that partake in passive leisure may be a result of decreased physical capabilities, leading to limited health benefits. Many older adults struggled with seeking out leisure participation that met their specific needs, which limited the potential to acquire benefits through engagement (Carbonneau et al., 2020; Toepoel, 2013; Provencher & Poulin, 2020). This was found to be a result of challenges associated with seeking out activities independently and satisfactorily as individuals age (Provencher & Poulin, 2020; Meisner et al., 2019). The process of aging posed novel challenges that were found to limit social participation and leisure behaviours of older adults. Especially in retirement, older adults are often forced into revisiting their expectations for leisure engagement while reconsidering the opportunities that are available to them (Provencher & Poulin, 2020).

### ***Impact of Social Position as an Older LGB Adult***

Social position can be understood as the attributes, such as age, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality (Bottero, 2005), that determine the position of an individual (or group) within a system of social relations (Farkas, 2022). The use of this definition draws attention to the impact of age, gender, and sexuality, on older LGB adults' experiences and perspectives of constraints to leisure.

In many Western societies, ageism often incites beliefs that older adults are asexual, which go hand in hand with presumptions of heterosexism (Addis et al., 2009; Mahieu et al., 2019). Heterosexism is the assumption that “all individuals are heterosexual, and heterosexuality is more natural and normal than same sex sexuality” (Addis et al., 2009, p. 653). This further increases older LGB adults' vulnerability to discrimination based on both age and sexual orientation. The prevalence of heteronormative and heterosexist assumptions further overlooks the realities of LGBT aging and adds to the social invisibility of older LGBT adults (Addis et al., 2009; Lecompte et al., 2020). Researchers reported that older LGBT adults stated that acknowledgement of their presence is needed to ensure their rights are being upheld (Wilson et al., 2019). Studies also highlight that older LGBT adults prioritize finding spaces that are explicitly inclusive (Putney et al., 2018), but non-discrimination policies are not enough to create an authentically inclusive environment (Cummings et al., 2021). As a result, many older LGBT adults become reliant on community-based supports, such as older adult centres, rather than aging services like health care, long-term care, or social service providers, due to anticipated discrimination (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014). Brennan-Ing and colleagues (2014) used a mixed-methods approach to understand the social care networks of 210 older LGBT adults in Chicago. The study focused on several variables including, sociodemographic characteristics, physical and

mental health status, social network, services used, and their need for services in the past. Older LGBT adults reported frequently turning to community-based services (such as senior centres) rather than health care providers or government offices and agencies.

Although active engagement and participation during one's leisure time is essential for improving individuals' quality of life, experiences of discrimination can hinder social participation of older adults (Provencher & Carbonneau, 2019). The presence of stereotypes, prejudice, and other negative evaluations expressed in personal interactions, can result in the internalization of negative self-evaluation, otherwise known as internalized homophobia (Mock & Hummel, 2012). More generally, the prevalence of discrimination and fear of stigmatization act as barriers to accessing health and social services. Similarly, studies have found that the experiences of marginalization and prejudice are negatively associated with access to social resources (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017c).

Researchers also suggested that older adults typically have fewer social contacts and a smaller network size (Toepoel, 2013). More specifically, research showed that older LGBT adults are more likely to have smaller networks than their heterosexual counterparts (Fokkema & Kuiper, 2009). This was often the result of less contact with their biological families, the increased likelihood that older LGBT adults are single, and likelihood that they are childless or have decreased contact with their children (Fokkema & Kuiper, 2009). As well, older gay and lesbian individuals are segregated from younger cohorts, as a result of age-based stereotypes and variation in generationally specific approaches to overcoming identity-related challenges (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010). These experiences of age-related stigmatization acted to further limit older LGBT adults' ability to maintain satisfactory participation in meaningful activities during their leisure time (Provencher & Carbonneau, 2019). Researchers further

illustrate that because gay and lesbian bars are frequently cited as the commonplace public spaces for LGBT community members, many older adults are left searching for other ways to create social networks. This was in part due to prominent ageist beliefs that exist across bar scenes, in addition to the lack of knowledge of other options available to older LGBT adults (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014).

### **Recreation and Leisure Provision**

In Canada, recreation and leisure services provision has a long history founded in advocacy efforts that prioritize improved living conditions for all Canadians (Markham-Starr, 2015). The early movements were pushed by advocates that saw recreation as a resource that would foster better physical and mental wellbeing, social welfare, and economic growth for cities. These motivations were based on perceptions of how to best meet the needs of the individual, their society, and the nation more generally (Markham-Starr, 2015). For example, during the 1930's, governments invested in the provision of recreation services in order to build the mental and physical character of Canadians in attempts to combat youth idleness and high employment rates (Tink et al., 2019). Recreation and leisure services continue to be highly valued across Canada, and significant changes have been made as the Canadian government has continued to recognize the key role that recreation plays in society (Karlis, 2016).

#### ***Provision of Recreation Services***

In the early 1900's, Canadian municipalities began offering recreation and leisure services as a result of urbanization (Karlis, 2016). The municipal level of government focuses on services that are low-cost to the participant and are provided for the good of society. Thus, municipalities serve communities at a local level, to meet the needs of the public, including local sport and



recreation groups (Karlis, 2016). Public recreation services and facilities are provided by the local government (i.e., a city, town, region) and may include sports fields, community centres, cultural/art centres, swimming lessons, summer day camps, and much more (Russell, 2017).

Comparatively, non-profit organizations are private agencies that provide specialized services and are associated with the expression of values and political participation (Jenkins & Pigram, 2003). Typically, non-profit organizations must expend any generated profits in accordance with achieving the organization's larger social mission. Most non-profit organizations' activities are intended to help achieve social aims, like decreasing social inequality, fighting diseases, or increasing security (Michalski, 2018). Literature shows that the role of non-profits vary from providing inclusive resources for some communities to catering to the interests of specific groups (Jossart-Marcelli et al., 2011). In some contexts, non-profit organizations are viewed as a supplementary resource, providing services that governments are unable to and in ways that better mobilize local resources and partnerships with other local actors. However, the growing reliance on these organizations for service delivery raises questions about whether their expanding role is encouraging a withdrawal of services from the public sector, and what impact such withdrawal could have on the quality and/or inclusivity of services (Jossart-Marcelli et al., 2011).

There are various factors that affect how older adults benefit from, participate in, and use community centres and other public recreation services. Researchers found that older adults' geographic proximity to community centres and cultural centres was positively associated with decreased social isolation (Lan Fang et al., 2016). As well, studies have shown that participation and engagement in community activities foster older adults' sense of belonging (Hutchinson & Gallant, 2016; Lund & Engelsrud, 2008). However, researchers know very little information

about how and where older people participate in their communities (Gough et al., 2021). Researchers have found that older LGBT adults have an interest in a variety of recreational programs, from inclusive spiritual and religious programs to general sports and recreation (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014). Nevertheless, older LGBT adults face unique barriers that reduce the accessibility of recreation and leisure opportunities and leave their needs unmet. These unique barriers further reinforce fears of real and perceived discrimination, when older LGBT adults do try to access mainstream services (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014).

Recent research is highlighting the need for service providers to make efforts to adapt existing services to better address the needs of diverse users (Roe & Galvin, 2020). For example, older LGBT adults are asking for services that honour who they are both as an individual and as a part of the larger LGBT+ community (Cummings et al., 2021). Leisure services specifically have been called upon to provide policies and practices that are inclusive and affirmative, to challenge institutionalized heterosexism and bi-, trans-, and homophobias across services (King, 2013). This important work must be done by improving education and training for service providers and staff, in order to enhance their cultural competency (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014). Some of the specific competencies to successfully serve older LGBT adult populations that have been identified include inclusive language practices, staff training and education that covers LGBT-specific issues, and policies that promote inclusive, safe environments for LGBT older adults (Lecompte et al., 2020; Roe & Galvin, 2020; Wilson et al., 2018).

### ***Older Adult Centres***

Older adult centres (OACs) are community-based spaces that are designed to provide regular services and activities specifically for older adults (Sheppard et al., 2016). These centres are specifically designed to promote the health and well-being of older adults, while simultaneously

providing opportunities to engage with their community (Pardasani & Thompson, 2012). Each year, OACs serve approximately 5 million older Canadians and are recognized as a crucial part of service delivery for older adults (Kadowaki & Mahmood, 2018). Studies show that if the programming is designed effectively and inclusively, OACs can successfully serve members of marginalized older adult cohorts, including LGBTQ adults (McGovern et al., 2016).

In Ontario, OACs are operated both by non-profit organizations and municipalities (Levi & Kadowaki, 2016). Non-profit organizations operate approximately 70% of OACs in Ontario, whereas municipal agencies provide 27% of centres (OACAO, 2020). Among 136 centres, 56% of centres have reported that they serve members of the LGBTQ2S community whereas 24% of centres reported challenges in reaching older LGBTQ2S adults (OACAO, 2020). Although research shows that OACs are the most used community-based resources for older LGBT adults (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014), there is evidence that older LGBT adults' participation is sparse. This evidence results in a gap in understanding about how senior centres support the engagement of older LGBT adults and the role that these centres play in the lives of these folks (McGovern et al., 2016). As such, this study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of older LGB adults' perspectives and experiences of the constraints that influence their participation in community-based recreation and leisure, including older adult centres.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Approach**

Continuity theory and the leisure constraints model were used to guide this research.

Continuity theory follows a constructionist epistemology, which assumes that individuals' ideas about reality and the world around them are understood and shaped by their previous life experiences (Crotty, 1998). Continuity theory further asserts that personal constructs about the world are influenced by one's social reality but are not explicitly determined by such influences (Atchley, 1999). Overall, continuity theory suggests that people select and pursue specific ideas, relationships, environments, and activity patterns, based on their personal ideas about their desired goals and the opportunities that are available to them (Lynch et al., 2016).

There are several key assumptions associated with continuity theory. One is that behaviour is guided by internal and external patterns (Atchley, 1999). Internal patterns are the ideas, mental skills, and other information that is stored in the mind, such as attitudes and values, beliefs, and personal goals. Internal patterns also involve self-schemas that individuals use to understand their experiences, promote oneself, develop a sense of motivation, and foster a developmental path (Atchley, 1999). Continuity theory contends that individuals do not change as they age; instead they become 'more' of who they always have been (Agahi et al., 2006). As such, continuity theory explains that as older adults attempt to maintain continuity of their internal patterns, their previous attitudes and behaviours are the most significant predictors of one's current and/or future behaviours (Utz et al., 2002).

External patterns are the ways social roles, personal relationships, living contexts, and geographical location are organized in the mind. These patterns encourage individuals to focus on the continuation of their activity and environments by remaining in familiar domains, especially when facing losses (i.e., social, psychological, physical) associated with aging

(Atchley, 1999). The successful continuation of one's activities, environments, and relationships are theorized to assist individuals in achieving their ideal self and avoiding loss of self-value. Further, the continuation of relationships specifically aids in preserving one's social support network and maintaining self-concept (Atchley, 1999). As well, several studies have found that participation in activity earlier in one's life is a strong predictor of engagement in later life (Aghadi et al., 2006; Utz et al., 2002). Finally, the literature illustrates that the continuity of familiar activities can promote equanimity in older adults (Lim & Song, 2018).

Another tenet of continuity theory is that people have developmental goals. These are goals for one's developmental direction, including ideals about oneself, future activities, relationships, and environments individuals want to achieve. Developmental goals are influenced by societal and geographical context that make up surrounding social structures, (i.e., family structures, notions related to gender, social class, and more, Atchley, 1999; Lynch et al., 2016). They are also shaped by life experiences, as these experiences help individuals make selective investments in parts of themselves to focus on, activities to partake in, and connections to make (Atchley, 1999).

Finally, continuity theory assumes that individuals have adaptive capacity, or the capacity to understand how to make productive choices and achieve satisfaction in life. Adaptation involves shaping and adjusting one's external life to align with their internal frameworks in order to maximize one's life satisfaction, given the circumstances (Atchley, 1999). As individuals age, they gain clarity about how to make effective decisions and what choices lead them to satisfaction in their lives (Atchley, 1999). More specifically, scholars suggest that for older adults to maintain continuity they must establish a sense of connection, specifically through processes of reflection, reinterpretation, reconstruction, and assimilation (Lim & Song, 2018).

This is connected to the capacity to adapt, as it requires the individual to rely upon the resources and knowledge available to them to successfully reflect, reinterpret, reconstruct, and assimilate as they age. Reinterpretation and reconstruction have been shown to help older adults use their past experiences to understand their current situation (Ayalon, 2016). The establishment of this connection can also help aid in times of transition and adaptation, as it helps to maintain one's connection to the parts of one's past that they believe are relevant to who they are currently (Kaufman, 1986).

The hierarchical model of leisure constraints is often used to understand how leisure constraints impact one's level of participation and the formation of one's leisure preferences (Crawford et al., 1991). For this study, this model was used to help understand how constraints influence the continuity of older LGB adults' recreation and leisure participation. In this model there are three levels of leisure constraints: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Intrapersonal constraints are the psychological states and attributes that shape one's leisure preferences (e.g., prior knowledge of specific leisure activity, perceptions of self-skill, and perceived appropriateness and availability of leisure activity) (Crawford et al., 1991). Interpersonal constraints are the social or cultural constraints that influence one's leisure behaviours. These constraints can impact both an individual's leisure preference and their participation (e.g., presence or absence of peer or partner support, conflicts in availability) (Crawford et al., 1991). Lastly, structural constraints are factors that are external to the individual that restrict their leisure participation (Crawford et al., 1991). These constraints include those that intervene between one's leisure preference and actual leisure participation, including age, race, gender, ability, accessibility, financial resources and more (Crawford, & Godbey, 1987, in Crawford et al., 1991). Constraints have been used in a variety of contexts to understand the

ways power operates through social and contextual forces to both constrain and enable leisure practices (Rich et al., 2022; Shogan, 2002).

Thus, continuity theory was used in this research as a lens to explore and understand older LGB adults' perspectives and experiences of the constraints to their recreation and leisure participation throughout their life course. The exploration was guided by continuity theory to investigate how older LGB adults' life experiences have influenced the way they pursue recreation and leisure opportunities. Key factors such as personal goals, societal and geographic context, access and resources, and subsequent decision-making processes were used to illuminate how older LGB adults' have negotiated their own recreation and leisure engagement throughout their life. The leisure constraints model was used as an additional lens to further understand the impact that constraints had on older LGB adults' ability to continue their recreation and leisure participation, and the strategies they used to achieve such. As well, understanding the external patterns (e.g., social roles, living contexts) can be crucial in highlighting how older LGB adults' perspectives and experiences of constraints have affected their (dis)continuity in their recreation and leisure participation in community-based services.

### **Positionality Statement**

The positioning of a researcher can include gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, personal experiences, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical stances, and much more (Berger, 2013). It is important to understand how these positions may impact the research, to recognize how it may affect the research setting, the participants, the questions that are asked, the data collected, and its interpretation (Berger, 2013). As a preliminary positionality statement, I acknowledge that I am a White, lesbian, cisgender female, who was between 23 to 24 years old at the time of the study. My membership within the LGBTQ+ community meant that I had a level of insider

knowledge, that those who are not a part of the community may not have. Often, being a part of the community was a topic raised when the older LGB participants asked about my research and what motivation or interest I had in the topic. For example, one was discussing their education path and had asked about my own education path. They then asked, “So why did you choose this topic for your Masters? Are you part of the LGBT community yourself?”. Conversations of this nature helped to give participants more of an understanding of who I was as a researcher, and what my motivations were to do the research I was doing.

However, due to my age, the generational differences between myself and participants added another dimension of fluidity of my positionality. In some ways, I had previous knowledge and understanding, but there were times where I was an outsider that did not have the same level of inside knowledge. There were no specific questions that participants asked about my age, however there were times where it was clear that I was an outsider to the generational knowledge and experiences of older LGB participants. For example, another participant was talking about their leisure in his childhood and said, “I know it’s weird if I tell you there wasn’t even an internet then.” Comments such as this made it clear that the generational differences between myself and the participants impacted the way that they understood me as a researcher and potentially the ways in which they shared their stories with me. It was moments such as those that encouraged me to focus on seeking out the information to contextualize my understanding of the time period specific context and influences that impacted their recreation and leisure throughout their lives. Reflecting on this helped to further understand how my position as both an insider and an outsider to the participants impacted the research process. Additionally, this difference in age implicated how participants shared their stories with me. Participants were more than happy to clarify if I did not understand their references. I found that this helped to



foster an environment in which they were helping me to understand their experiences, and that I was ultimately learning from them in this way. Especially in reference to participants' discussions of the AIDS epidemic, as I do not personally have any experiences related to this time-period specific context, the participants' stories of this time helped me to gain an understanding of the impact of societal changes in a more personal way. This helped me to better understand the personal experiences and magnitude of events as such these, and overall strengthened my understanding and appreciation of older LGB adults' resiliency.

Positionality is situational and relational, and adapts over the course of research (Folkes, 2022). During the course of this research project, I took on a full-time recreation practitioner position with a local municipality. This impacted my knowledge as it relates to the practitioners that were involved in this project. Although I had conducted all four of the practitioner interviews prior to this transition, my knowledge in relation to community-based and publicly funded recreation services was growing during my analysis process.

As well, both of my parents have worked as recreation practitioners in municipal services for most of my life, and more recently, my twin sister now works as a therapeutic recreationist. These connections to the provision of recreation services have implications for my personal connection to and appreciation of recreation and leisure. These connections originate beyond my studies and work experiences, and influenced the decisions I made as a researcher (Rich & Misener, 2017). This influenced the research process, as my intention was to seek out the stories of older LGB adults that contribute insight into the realities of their participation, to further draw attention to tangible lessons and practices that practitioners could incorporate to their practices.

Further, given my past experiences working in recreation services, and having spent the last 6 years studying recreation and leisure, I was an insider with the practitioners I spoke with. This

inherently influenced the ways that I understood and assigned value to community-based recreation and leisure services. In order to reflect on my dynamic position throughout the research process, it was important for me maintain a level of transparency with the participants about my intention as a researcher and to have my work reviewed by my supervisor and committee members. These strategies helped to reflect on how my positionality, and more specifically my values and beliefs, influenced the research process.

More generally, my connection to this research topic is through my interests in the field of recreation and leisure. Prior to graduate school, I completed my undergraduate degree in Recreation and Leisure Studies with a major in Community Recreation. My studies introduced me to the literature that described the benefits of community-based recreation and leisure services and sparked my interest in how these services are being used by older LGB adults, across their life span. My education and personal experience with recreation and leisure implicates my personal appreciation and value of such, which had an influence on research design, the questions I asked, how I interacted with participants, my analysis of their stories, and moreover the results of this research. As such, the findings represent a lot of participants' positive recreation and leisure experiences. However, these positive experiences can be used to help understand how experiences of a similar nature can be encouraged and fostered in the provision of services that these older LGB adults are seeking out. It should be noted that the nature of this analysis does not mean to suggest that older LGB adults did (and do) not experience instances of ageism or homo/biphobia. Overall, my intention was to use this research to understand what recreation and leisure participation looks like in the lives of older LGB adults and to do so in a way that honours their experiences and stories.

## Chapter 4: Methodological Approach

### Narrative Inquiry

The purpose of this research was to understand older LGB adults' experiences and perspectives of the constraints that influence their leisure participation in community-based recreation and leisure, and the role that community-based recreation and leisure services have in supporting participation throughout the lifespan. It sought to answer (1) how older LGB adults continue their recreation and leisure participation throughout their life course, and (2) the role of community-based recreation services in supporting recreation participation among older LGB adults. Narrative inquiry can be understood as study of stories, narratives, or descriptions of a series of events. Methods for analyzing and understanding the stories, that are lived and told, are informed by the theoretical literature that informs the methodology or the understanding of experiences the researcher began with (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Narrative research acknowledges the researcher and research participants are embedded in context, that all people, cultures, and events have history that affects the present (and the research itself) (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Using narratives as data provides an opportunity to invite the participants into the research, to share their knowledge and understanding, and express meaning through their stories. The collection and representation of specific stories thus informs an understanding of particular experiences, phenomena, and human existence, in specific contexts (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

As a methodology, narrative inquiry offered an approach that allowed for a holistic collection of personal narratives that illustrated participants' subjective perspectives of their lived experiences (Atkinson, 2007). A personal narrative can be defined as the portrayal of one's lived experience integrated with the meanings associated with their life events (Hammack & Cohler, 2009). Narratives can be understood as tools that help form human emotion and

behaviour. As such, narrative inquiry draws on a range of methods to describe and interpret how individuals make sense of the world and behave within it (Smith & Sparkes, 2017).

Narrative inquiry further asserts that personal narratives cannot be removed from social narratives and larger historical factors. Social scientists use narrative inquiry to understand how larger societal narratives influence human development, where individuals actively engage with their cultural and historical contexts using the tools that are available to them (Murray, 2018). More recently, the exploration of personal narratives, or life stories, has been used to promote dialogues that can inform an understanding of the issues and troubles faced by marginalized populations (Lenart-Chang & Walker, 2011). Such an introspective process of sharing lived experiences is often recognized for providing more immediate access to a population's needs and priorities as defined by participants (Lenart-Chang & Walker, 2011).

Narrative inquiry offered an approach that provides insight to lived experience and perspective, which in the context of this research project, was intended to promote the voices and experiences of older LGB adults, a population that is too often silenced. Through the collection and analysis of their stories, this research sought to provide a foundation of understanding, with implications for service provision, as well as to empower and raise the voices of older LGB adults. Overall, narrative inquiry was used in this study to gain a contextual understanding of older LGB adults' experiences and perspectives of community-based recreation and leisure, and the continuity of such experiences across their life course.

### **Sampling Strategy**

For this project, I sought out the perspectives of older LGB adults as well as recreation practitioners. The older adults who were sampled for this study were required to be able to

provide the perspectives and experiences of older LGB adults and their participation (or lack thereof) in community-based recreation and leisure. As such, the inclusion criteria for this study's older adults were individuals that are 60 years of age and older, who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and that have engaged in community-based recreation and leisure activities and/or programs. Participants were required to be residents of Canada, community-dwelling adults which can be defined as individuals who live in private households or dwellings (Statistics Canada, 2011). In order to capture a range of perspectives, individuals with high to medium engagement and individuals with low to no engagement were sought out.

The inclusion criteria for practitioners were as outlined; individuals who are or have been employed or volunteer(ed) in a community-based recreation or leisure setting, that have experience working directly with older LGB adults. These individuals were sought out to gain further insight into organizational structures and programming that may influence and impact the services older LGB adults seek out and engage with.

Research suggests that a combination of sampling techniques can aid in achieving a diverse sample, especially when recruiting hard-to-reach populations (Hash & Spencer, 2009). Due to the hard-to-reach nature of older LGB adults (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Kim, 2017b), the data collection process involved two sampling techniques in aims to achieve a diverse sample. To begin, a chain referral sampling technique (Lee & Ong, 2020) was used to identify preliminary, eligible persons (both older LGB adults and recreation practitioners). This process involved identifying agencies, organizations, or key informants who can suggest individuals for this study and reaching out to them in order to gain access to the population (Tracey, 2019), and this included both older LGB adults and practitioners. Second, individuals who participated were then asked to recruit other eligible persons from their social networks (Lee & Ong, 2020).

Studies show that using social network chain-referrals can help to access older LGB adults who are not associated with community-based organizations and increase access to minority community groups (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Kim, 2017b).

### **Data Collection**

For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore older LGB adults' experiences. Interviews are useful when using narrative inquiry, because listening to participants' life stories can be an important method of gathering information, specifically when exploring societal issues and the difficulties encountered by marginalized groups (Lenart-Chang & Walker, 2011). As such, conversational interviews provide the opportunity for explanatory inquiry to understand how and why events and/or decisions came about (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007). Overall, interviews offer participants the chance to discuss their experiences in-depth while allowing for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participants themselves (Atkinson, 2007). This was specifically relevant to this study, as discussing participant experiences can illustrate older LGB adults' perspectives to better understand the factors, across the lifespan, that influence their recreation and leisure participation.

In accordance with narrative inquiry, I conducted two interviews with most of the older LGB participants, to provide ample opportunity to explore their life experiences. The interviews followed a semi-structured guide (see Appendix A for interview guide) to elicit each individual's life stories and experiences related to their leisure engagement. The interview guide consisted of 11 questions that focused on the topic of study, along with 25 specific probes. The interview questions focused on topics such as leisure in early years, middle age life, and later life; significant relationships associated with leisure; and characteristics of recreation and leisure programs. The interview guide design was developed based on the structure used in life story or

biographical interviews (Kim, 2016). The life story interview is often used in narrative inquiry, as it involves guiding the individual through the process of telling their life story (Kim, 2016). The interview guide used in this study focused on the participants' specific experiences, as they relate to their recreation and leisure participation. As such, interview questions were designed to follow a sequential order beginning with questions about participants' early recreation and leisure, ending with questions about their most recent experiences. These questions were intended to be used during the first interview, as time permitted. Questions included in the latter part of the interview guide focused on participants' perspectives of and experiences with specifically community-based programs and organizations. These questions were most often asked during the participants' second interview. Interviews were transcribed and reviewed between each participant's first and second interview, which allowed for an opportunity to seek clarification from participants during their second interview as needed. Interviews were conducted with eight older LGB adults over the phone. Three participants did not participate in follow-up interviews for a variety of reasons (e. g., answered all relevant questions in the first interview, were unavailable to schedule).

A separate interview guide was developed for the practitioner interviews. This interview guide was also semi-structured and focused on the details related to organizational structures (i.e., policy, practices, training) and programming (see Appendix B). The interview guide consists of a total of 8 questions (along with 12 probes) that focused on various aspects of the participants' experiences working with older LGB adults in community-based recreation and leisure contexts. The interview questions focused on topics such as roles and responsibilities, experiences working with diverse community members, and organizational characteristics. This interview guide was designed to engage with the practitioners in order to consider the factors that

influence the older LGB adults' first-hand experiences and ultimately promote a contextualized understanding of how larger, societal level factors impact their experiences. This was done in alignment with narrative inquiry, as the approach asserts that personal narratives cannot be removed from social narratives and the larger historical factors that shape them. The practitioners' perspectives and stories thus provided insight into how the organizations' involved in recreation and leisure provision, and any relevant characteristics, were implicated within the experiences and perspectives of older LGB adults.

### **Recruitment**

Emails were sent out to 14 organizations across Ontario via publicly available emails with a brief description of the research (see Appendix C for the email script). Participants were asked to contact me, using the information provided, if they were interested in participating in the study. Once an organization responded, I provided the letter of information that outlined further details regarding what participation in the study would entail for the organization (see Appendix D for the letter of information). After confirming the organization's participation, I forwarded the respective letters of information for the older LGB adults and the practitioners, to be circulated at the organization's discretion. Any interested individuals were asked to contact me via email, which I responded to with the consent form and scheduled the interview for a time that best suited their schedule.

There were challenges faced during recruitment, as organizations were navigating reopening after the COVID-19 pandemic. Though 14 organizations were contacted, a total of 5 agreed to participate while many of the others never responded. In order to pivot and find additional ways to reach potential participants, recruitment involved two added strategies that were implemented to reach a larger audience. Beyond emailing, Twitter and LinkedIn posts were



used. Posts were made near the end of the recruitment period to broaden the outreach to potential participants. A recruitment informational poster was created (see Appendix E) that was included along with a brief description of the intended audience. The recruitment informational poster was shared once online, and with agencies and organizations to be circulated around their centres as they saw fit. Once an interested participant contacted me via email, I shared the letter of information and consent form. The other recruitment strategy I utilized was networking. At the request of one of the organization's facilitators, I virtually attended an online program held by one of the participating organizations. With permission from the program facilitator, I was able to enter the virtual program to verbally provide information about the study and answer questions. This was done to help develop trust and build rapport, with the intention of enticing further potential participants.

**Table 1**

***Recruitment Strategies***

Recruitment Strategy	How	When	Recruitment Results
Chain referral strategy	Emails were sent to 14 organizations; 9 responded and agreed to circulate the information	January to March 2022	Recruited 2 older adults, 2 practitioners
Virtually attended program	Joined the organization A's Zoom session to provide more information about the research project to potential participants, and answered any questions	Feb 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2022	3 older adults
Recruitment Poster	Shared with organizations previously connected with and included in communications with additional organizations; shared once on LinkedIn and Twitter	February 2022	3 older adults, 2 practitioners

Participants of the study were older LGB adults, as well as practitioners that worked with older LGB adults in community-based recreation and leisure settings. The older LGB

participants were between the ages of 62 and 78, that lived independently in private households or dwellings and were interested in sharing their recreation and leisure experiences. Six of the participants identified as gay men. The other two participants identified as female, one who identified as bisexual and the other who identified as lesbian (see Table 2 below for more details). The participants had a range of engagement with community-based recreation from very rarely to daily participation.

**Table 2**

***Older LGB Participant Information***

Name	Age	Sexual Orientation	Background Information
Andrews	72	Gay male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Always has enjoyed music &amp; theatre</li> <li>- Had a career as pianist</li> <li>- Involved with 6 choral groups and 7 theatre groups</li> <li>- Involved in Organization A</li> </ul>
Cameron	72	Bisexual female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loves to travel</li> <li>- Leisure revolves around friends and family</li> <li>- Not involved in any community-based recreation and leisure services/organizations</li> </ul>
Davis	63	Gay male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Retired educator</li> <li>- Involved with local gay hockey league for last 21 seasons</li> <li>- Enjoys the outdoors</li> </ul>
Fisher	77	Gay male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Retired physician</li> <li>- Heavily involved with local organizations and clubs</li> <li>- Involved in Organization A</li> </ul>
Johnston	69	Gay male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Retired educator</li> <li>- Enjoys creative writing</li> <li>- Heavily involved with local clubs and organizations</li> <li>- Involved in Organization A</li> </ul>
Mitchell	62	Gay male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional artist</li> <li>- Seeking to reconnect with old friends and find new companions</li> <li>- Involved in two local LGBT organizations</li> </ul>

Murphy	78	Gay male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Immigrated to Canada as a young adult</li> <li>- Involved in two older adult organizations</li> <li>- Enjoys dance, music, and yoga</li> <li>- Involved in Organization A</li> </ul>
Raven	65	Lesbian female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteers with pet therapy organization</li> <li>- Health issues forced her to retire early</li> <li>- Outside of volunteering, leisure involves mostly time with family and friends</li> </ul>

The practitioners were individuals who had experience working with and/or delivering recreation and leisure services to older LGB adults in Ontario. Two practitioners were recruited through the chain referral strategy where organizations forwarded the letter of information along to relevant individuals, and the other two made contact after the recruitment informational poster was shared online. Any individuals who were interested then contacted me and I forwarded along the consent form and scheduled an interview for a time that best aligned with their schedule. Accordingly, interviews were conducted with four practitioners who worked in community-based recreation and leisure services in Ontario (see Table 3 below for more details). Pseudonyms and general job position titles were used for each participant to help protect anonymity.

**Table 3**

***Practitioner Participant Information***

Name	Organization Information	Job Title
Balsam	Organization A, non-profit for seniors	2SLGBTQ program facilitator
Fleetwood	Organization B, non-profit multi-service seniors' centre	LGBTQ+ program coordinator
Scugog	Organization C, senior care settings	(Former) activity aid
Sturgeon	Organization D, religious institution that serves the local LGBTQ+ community	A minister

In total, 15 interviews were conducted and transcribed. Fourteen interviews were conducted over the phone, and one via Microsoft Teams. All the interviews were scheduled during times that worked best for participants, with the majority taking place on weekday mornings and afternoons. Two of the participants partook in the same interview and follow-up, as they are partners, and this was most convenient for their schedule. The interviews ranged between 31 minutes and 75 minutes, with an average length of 45 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded, which all participants provided verbal consent to prior to beginning the recording. Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Notes were taken during the interviews that were intended to capture participants' answers, highlight specific aspects of participants' stories, draw connection between interviews, and record any questions or probes for follow up. These notes were used to help guide additional questions and probes during the second interview. As well, it helped me to ensure that any clarifications that were needed were made during the second interview.

## **Data Analysis**

There are various, distinct approaches to narrative analysis. Narrative analysis or narrative mode of analysis, which was undertaken in this study, analyzes the actions and events in the narratives to produce a coherent story of the participants' experience (Kim, 2019). This type of analysis is intended to elicit understandings of why and how events happened the way they did, and how participants' behaviour was implicated by such (Kim, 2019). The specific type of narrative analysis that was undertaken in this research was thematic narrative analysis. Thematic narrative analysis focuses explicitly on the content of the stories, with intention to identify dominant patterns and relationships within and across stories (Smith & Sparkes, 2017). Together, narrative mode of analysis and thematic narrative analysis worked together to portray

the themes within and across participants' stories, presented in such a way that prioritizes the significance of participants' lived experience through narratives (Kim, 2019).

In this study, I followed the steps of thematic narrative analysis, commonly known as categorical-content analysis, focusing on the content of each participants' story in order to identify dominant themes and relationships (Smith, 2017). There are key steps that were used to guide the data interpretation. The following steps were followed for the analysis of each interview conducted with the older LGB adults. The first step included verbatim transcription of each interview, which included emerging analytical thoughts. This was done immediately following the interviews, and initial review was completed prior to the participant's second interview. This was done to help ensure that any clarifications were made and any gaps in information was addressed with the participant in the second interview.

The next step comprised of organizing and becoming familiar with the data. I did this by reading the transcripts several times and recording initial thoughts in the margins (Smith, 2017). This was done once both interviews were completed for each participant. The transcripts were reviewed alongside one another to capture the entirety of participant's stories and consider the data of both interviews.

The third step of analysis is to search for and identify patterns among individual stories and across the stories. This was done by coding the interview transcripts. Those codes were further used during a rereading of each older LGB participant's data to create a depiction of their life story, as told by their accounts. This was done separately for each older LGB participant and helped to identify the patterns among the individual stories and these patterns were then compared across the data to identify similarities and differences among participants (Smith, 2017). Ultimately, this step helped to summarize the key meanings across the data. The

following step involved identifying and labelling themes, by grouping the codes together, supported by key codes from practitioner data. A combination of data and notes were used to describe each theme in order to outline its contents and offer preliminary interpretations. For example, key themes like ‘leisure as means to socialize’, ‘seeking connection through leisure’, ‘support network enabled/maintained leisure participation’, and ‘programs offer space to find connection and belonging’ were grouped together to form the second theme, Social Network Augmentation and inform its two respective subthemes.

The last step involved the process of representing the results, by drawing connections between the themes and offering insight to the participants’ stories (Smith, 2017). This was done by first reviewing the themes and identifying the examples of texts that best represented those themes, and then through the process of writing this thesis, using specific quotations from the participants’ stories to help illustrate their lived experiences.

Additionally, the analysis of the practitioner interviews was completed in order to understand the organizational characteristics that shaped the stories shared by the older LGB adults. Narrative inquiry asserts that experience is a storied phenomenon, and requires the exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives that individual experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted within (Caine et al., 2019). As such, the practitioners’ data was used to provide supplementary insight into the narrative that the older LGB adults’ experiences were constituted within. Similar to the analysis of the older LGB adult interviews, practitioner interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2012). While 3 of the 4 practitioners did not work specifically with older LGB participants of this study, practitioners’ discussions were focused on the same ideas and/or experiences (e.g. programs for older LGB adults) and often helped to draw on the broader discussion(s) implicated in the stories

of the older LGB adults (e.g. responding to the needs of the population). Further, one practitioner was recruited from the same organization as 4 of the older LGB participants which provided complementary insights to the experiences of those older LGB adults.

As such, thematic analysis is a method that allows for the systematic identification and organization of data to provide insight into patterns of meaning (also known as themes) within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The following steps were undertaken for the analysis of each of the practitioner interviews. The first step was to become familiar with the data, which involved reading and rereading through the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This was done during the initial review of each verbatim transcription of the interviews. During this phase, initial notes were made in the margins of the transcripts, and preliminary relevant portions of the text were underlined.

The second step involved the generation of initial codes, to summarize or describe portions of data or describe the content of said data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This was done by highlighting the specific chunk of text in the transcript and marking down the code in the margins. After rereading each transcript and reviewing the codes, the third step was to generate themes by identifying similarities in the codes and clustering them (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In order to do this, the codes were organized with other codes that seemed to reflect similar meanings and ultimately patterns in the data. During this step, the practitioner codes and clusters were integrated among the codes generated from the older LGB adults' data to identify preliminary themes of the entire data set.

The last step involved selecting specific extracts of the data that best captured the most relevant and important elements of the practitioner data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). These quotations were then utilized during the representation of the results, through the writing of this

thesis, in order to exemplify the connection between the older LGB adults' stories and the practitioners' insights. This was done intentionally to provide a contextualized representation of the older LGB adults' experiences, integrated with the perspectives of practitioners who serve the population.



## Chapter 5: Findings

Studies that use narrative inquiry seek to describe and interpret how individuals make sense of the world and behave within it (Smith & Sparkes, 2017). Using continuity theory, narratives were examined to understand how older LGB adults' life experiences and prior knowledge have influenced the way they have pursued recreation and leisure opportunities. The analysis identified three key themes that related to older LGB adult's recreation and leisure experiences and perspectives of the constraints to their participation in recreation and leisure and the role that community-based services played in supporting such. These are: *Adaptation of Leisure Engagement*; *Social Network Augmentation*, and *Consolidation of Interests, Values, and Leisure*.

### **Adaptation of Leisure Engagement**

Across the interviews, participants shared stories that illuminated the ways in which their leisure practices had shifted across their lives. For many, they were able to continue their leisure participation using two strategies; negotiating the scope of their engagement and modifying the activity they chose to pursue. These approaches allowed participants to make selective investments in their leisure choices, in turn ensuring that they remained in touch with the pursuits most meaningful to them. As such, the following subthemes are *Negotiation of Scope* and *Modification of Pursuit*.

#### ***Negotiation of Scope***

The participants described how their adaptive capacity for leisure engagement was influenced by factors in their lives, such employment, education, and issues of human rights, and the ways that they have had to negotiate their leisure choices accordingly. As these processes can

be understood in relation to participants' capacity to make productive choices and achieve satisfaction in life through the accumulation of learning processes, adaptations, personal developments, and selective investments; it was often the breadth and domain of their leisure that was subject to negotiation. For many, they relied on a negotiation-type strategy during times of transition, such as entering the workforce or moving to a new place, and especially as they attempted to juggle other obligations like work and education. These types of changes and transitions give insight into how participants' lives developed as they aged, from their early childhood to their later life.

For example, Raven recalled how she had been heavily involved in a variety of sports from an early age, from basketball and soccer to softball and track and field. Even though she described herself as a shy kid, Raven explained how her involvement in sports helped her come out of her shell and gain a sense of confidence in herself. After a quick transition from school immediately into the workforce, Raven recalled it was around that same time, at age 19, that she moved across provinces "just because I couldn't tell my family [about my sexuality], it wasn't possible." In a new province, with very little money and no support from her parents, Raven explained the negative impact that her lack of financial security had on her engagement in recreation and leisure:

I either couldn't afford it or was working so hard there wasn't a lot of time for any leisure stuff. Other than, you know, getting together with friends to play cards and had a lot of card games with groups of our gay friends.

Raven described how even when she was more financially secure, her work obligations impeded on her time to engage in recreation and leisure. However, Raven was able to adapt her leisure

engagement, from heavy involvement in sport, by aligning her external patterns with her internal framework; to participating in leisure that was inexpensive and held in the hours outside of work.

Similar to Raven, Murphy recalled how the obligations of his post-secondary education had occupied his focus, leaving little time for extracurricular activities. Murphy described growing up in the Middle East, where his childhood and teen years were filled with daily trips to the beach, spending time with friends, listening to radio broadcasts, and occasional trips to the movie theatre. In his early adulthood, Murphy explained how he had served in the military for three years before pursuing higher education. Murphy described the significant impact his pursuit of further education had on his leisure:

Then I went to university, [and] there was no time for leisure, I was so busy with studies. Except meeting with friends, going to the movie[s] here and there. There was no time for much [leisure] because I had work to do.

Murphy explained that his pursuit of education had dominated his time, at the age of 21, pushing any pursuit of leisure to a substandard. Murphy made a selective investment of his time in order to promote his internal pattern, related to the value of attaining post-secondary education, thus causing a shift in his external pattern (leisure choices) to reflect such. Once he had finished university, Murphy described how his leisure time was predominantly used to travel and see the world.

The negotiation of the scope of their leisure engagement allowed participants to navigate the circumstances they faced throughout their life, while sustaining a level of leisure involvement. Johnston described a change in his leisure choices as the AIDS epidemic reached its height. Johnston recalled how his childhood leisure consisted mostly of spending time with

friends, playing pool in friends' basements, trips to the movies, and playing basketball in the school yard. In high school, Johnston explained, he always tried to be active in his school and was heavily involved in clubs, such as yearbook, student council, and the camera club. Johnston recalled he was very secretive about his sexual orientation and did not come out until his early adult life. When he did come out, in the early 1970's, Johnston explained how he started seeking out spaces to meet other gay men, such as gay bars, local Pride committees, and social, recreation groups for gay men, to "make up for lost time." It was in the 1980's that Johnston recalled a shift from this participation to volunteering to fight the disease that afflicted the gay community:

We left it in the 1980's. And, as I think I mentioned to you, once the AIDS epidemic hit, we were sort of consumed with assisting men who were fighting the disease. We had to sort of drop some things.

Johnston described how the AIDS epidemic, and increasingly prevalent issues around gay rights, compelled his motivation to volunteer and help those living with AIDS. Johnston explained that he left the Pride committee and the social group, to pursue the activities that took precedence and focus his efforts on volunteering. It was through the selective investment in his leisure choices that Johnston was able to negotiate the scope of his leisure participation. Since the epidemic, Johnston has continued to volunteer for organizations of similar nature and maintained his support of people who were fighting the AIDS epidemic and the LGBT community more broadly to present day.

Andrews recalled an experience that parallels what Johnston spoke of, where his leisure choices had shifted in the face of novel circumstances. Andrews explained his early love and involvement with the arts began from when he was a young child. Andrews described how he

and his family were heavily involved in church and theatre throughout his teen years, which he preferred over other activities he participated in, such as youth group. Though his love for theatre remained, Andrews explained that his focus shifted to music as he studied piano in university and throughout his career as a pianist. In his leisure time, Andrews described excursions to karaoke nights in gay clubs, and trips to cultural festivals with a group of gay friends. It was in his retirement, Andrews recalled, he found himself with an abundance of time for leisure, from volunteering with theatre groups to participating in a variety of recreational seniors' groups. Andrews explained, it was during this time that he was able to shift back to focusing on theatre. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Andrews was no longer able to participate in the choral groups and theatre, and (although forced) found a negotiation strategy that allowed him to continue his participation:

I was in six theater groups and each one had two spaces so that 12 opportunities for theater, so I had to be so organized to get myself to see everything. So then I was involved with choral groups because I like good choral music ... and so that all went with the Covid. But I was fortunate I was on the internet and Zoom, and I was still connected with lots of seniors' groups, doing exercise and lots of it.

Andrews explained how his leisure choices (although limited) had shifted, from predominantly theatre and choral groups to online recreation programs, to uphold his day-to-day routine during the pandemic. Andrews described that with the major closures, it was only the community-based recreation organizations that had sustained their program opportunities by transitioning to online facilitation. Through the negotiation of the scope of his leisure, Andrews was able to find contentment in the leisure available to him during a period of disruption.

From the periods of their lives where they were consumed with work and education to their transition to retirement, participants used negotiation techniques that helped them to navigate the shifts around them while maintaining their leisure engagement. Their leisure participation varied throughout their lives, but it was never abandoned. By utilizing the opportunities around them, whether that was finding activities with friends or seeking out new groups, participants have been able to lead lives of recurrent participation in recreation and leisure activities. For some, it was the community-based recreation and leisure services that they sought out to do so.

### ***Modification of Pursuit***

Although many participants were able to sustain their leisure engagement, there was a recurring theme where participants' leisure choices were modified. This shift often coincided with changes in their personal lives. For some, it was increased independence that they felt as they moved away from home and were able to express their sexuality in ways they could not previously. Others, as they have aged, experienced a loss of self-confidence which left them reconsidering their choices about which activities to participate in. Participants' leisure choices were influenced by the ways their needs transformed as they navigated through life.

These modifications can be distinguished from negotiation techniques, as described above, as these changes were often based on participants' perceptions of appropriateness or availability of the leisure pursuit, whereas negotiation strategies were used when participants encountered perceived constraints imposed by external factors (i.e., AIDS epidemic, COVID pandemic, employment obligations, etc.). As such, participants made the choice to modify the activities they pursued in order to support their leisure participation.

For Raven, her work was always a significant part of her identity. Raven had a very successful career at the company she had started at from right out of high school. Raven explained that although she had started as a secretary, by the end of her career was a manager of sales for the company. A self-described “workaholic”, Raven recalled how her experience with cancer had forced her into early retirement and left her searching for a sense of purpose. Although playing cards was a leisure activity Raven had fond memories of, the impact to her health caused a shift in her internal patterns. It was through a pet therapy program she had been introduced to during her time in the hospital, that Raven was able to adapt her leisure choices and get involved in, which provided her with a sense of fulfillment and contribution:

Like I said I totally lost my drive, like I said cancer changed me totally as a person ... I had a couple of really tough years where what I did was such a big part of who I was, that all of a sudden, I couldn't even learn a new card game. So that was a tough period in my life for a couple of years, but I am fine now, and you know just getting out with [my dog] and feeling useful again, and doing what we do at the hospital, gives me a sense of contentment and feeling that I am giving back.

Similarly, Davis described how his age, at 64, often left him rethinking his participation in the recreational hockey league he has played in for the better part of two decades. Although his parents signed him up for two hockey leagues as a child, Davis explained his lack of athletic ability had made his experience playing hockey extremely negative. Being the youngest of six, Davis recalled being ridiculed by his family for being unable to keep up with his older siblings. In light of these negative experiences, Davis quit playing hockey when he was 14 and focused his energy on skiing, the sport he claims to have been his saviour in terms of athletics. Davis explained that it was not until his adult life, when he came across a local gay hockey league, that

he reconsidered hockey and fell in love with the sport. His experience in the league was completely different, Davis described, where the fact that he showed up, stayed positive, and tried his best, was more important to his teammates than athletic ability. However, Davis described how his age was the catalyst behind the reconsideration of continuing in the league:

I figure that hockey is – it's kind of winding down for me. I'm the second oldest person in the [league]. Towards the end of the season, somebody – I think they thought they were giving me a compliment for showing up for a game when we were going to be short benched. But they basically said I was better than having an empty space on the bench (laughs) and I was like Oh ... okay, so I thought about that for a couple of days. It started to get me down and I thought, Oh, maybe I should just make this my last season or maybe next year my last season.

Although it was a conversation about his ability that spurred his reconsideration, Davis draws correlation between his age and his ability. Davis's participation in the league is a leisure pursuit he attributes great significance to, but he explained how he has considered hanging up his skates and finding another leisure activity to pursue. Despite these considerations, Davis seemed to have decided to continue on playing in the league for a few more years.

Another participant, Johnston, who had always been heavily involved in local groups and organizations, many of which were LGBTQ+ focused, recalled how he felt the need to seek out alternate leisure organizations as he has aged:

I wasn't aware of any senior events, of course, when I was much younger but once you retire, you sort of seek them out ... These other groups existed for people of all ages, but they were primarily younger folk involved at that time. And we just basically shifted



from our involvement in those organizations to the seniors' groups, once we hit a certain age level.

Johnston explained that once he had retired, he felt the need to re-examine his leisure engagement in programs that seemed to serve a younger audience. Johnston was able to modify his engagement by seeking out alternative leisure spaces and community-based organizations that catered to an audience he felt represented in, to maintain his leisure engagement. Johnston was able to draw on his past experiences to help restructure and assimilate to the leisure opportunities he felt were available to him, while upholding his value of maintaining his connection with the queer community. For Johnston, it was the range of community-based recreation services that he had available which supported his adaptation.

Andrews explained a similar shift in his leisure as he has aged. Andrews recounted how after retiring from his career as a pianist, he found himself with lots of free time for leisure. Though Andrews described his need to keep busy, his trepidation about reaching a significant aging milestone was the motivation to find pursuits to add to his leisure repertoire. Andrews described how he felt the need to seek out leisure activities that gave him a sense of assurance in knowing there were spaces to go to as he approached 65:

I was so afraid of being 65, that at 62, I started to do some research and I was open to what I could find. But I became interested in groups that were working with seniors' groups. So I got involved with seniors' groups ... I wanted some security, and I wanted to have something to do like many people when they're turning 65 and they won't be working, [they worry] what am I going to do?

Andrews recalled that through seeking out seniors' leisure organizations and services, he was able to modify and subsequently diversify the organizations he was involved with while maintaining a satisfactory level of engagement. Like Johnston, Andrews utilized the community-based services that were around him to fill his leisure time and satisfy his need for security.

Participants' stories demonstrate the resiliency of the participants as they adjust to change and illustrate how dynamic one's leisure can be across the lifespan. In conversations with practitioners, it was clear that they also recognized the variety of needs and interests that older LGB adults were looking for in their leisure. For example, Sturgeon, who facilitated various social-recreational programs that serve the LGBT community in his role as a community leader at a local non-profit organization, showed how his understanding of the changing needs and also capacities of older LGB adults are essential to providing affirming services. In his story about booking a bus to transport older adults with physical limitations to the Pride parade, Sturgeon exemplifies how service providers can help older LGB adults to sustain their participation as they navigate changes in their lives:

When we were still doing Pride ... we rented a double decker bus ... [and] what that did is it empowered seniors, gay and lesbian, to board the bus because they couldn't walk the parade. But it empowered them, they were just lit up with glee and joy, to not be bystanders but to be participants. And that's a key thing, because [that is] something that so much needs to happen.

Participants' stories show how community-based recreation services and LGBT+ specific organizations played an essential role in supporting participation in recreation and leisure activities. Sturgeon added to this by providing an example of how providing leisure opportunities that are designed to meet the needs of the participants is crucial. There is a clear connection to

the role that these recreation organizations can play in supporting the participation of older LGB adults, by simply providing variety and accommodation.

### **Social Network Augmentation**

The expansion and preservation of social networks was a common theme throughout participants' stories of their participation in recreation and leisure. Many participants explained how the leisure activities they had partaken in throughout their lives were positively associated with developing new connections and maintaining relationships with those already around them.

### ***Opportunity to Expand***

Several participants explained how leisure activities and recreation pastimes provided them with the opportunity to socialize, engage with their local neighbourhood, and find a sense of community. From early on in their lives, participants shared tales about how their leisure activities facilitated the development of personal connections and relationships. Mitchell recalled how his childhood was filled with artistic leisure pursuits, from the early age of 5, such as drawing, and other recreational pastimes, such as biking and playing card games. As he transitioned into his teen years, Mitchell explained he spent most of his time drawing in sketchbooks, going to the movies, eating out at restaurants with friends, and going on dates with girls. It was not until his late teens into his early 20's, Mitchell recalled, that he came out. Mitchell recounted how his apprehension about coming out to his friends had compelled him to seek out different social relationships and settings:

So, my socialization changed a bit at the point. Because I left my Jewish friends, some of them I figured would not handle me well as a gay male. So, I kind of left them behind, sort of thing, and moved ahead with gay friends. Yeah, and started going to bars ... it was

a transitional bar for young gay men that were not old enough to drink, that wanted to go out and socialize and dance and party. I met [my partner] at a bar.

Mitchell described how leisure spaces like gay bars facilitated the connections he was seeking as he navigated through his experience of coming out. For Mitchell, gay bars were a space where he felt comfortable seeking connections with those like him, ultimately expanding his social network. As Mitchell's internal and external patterns shifted, these leisure spaces helped him align with his new sense of self.

Similarly, Murphy recalled how his leisure pastimes were the mechanism through which he connected to entire community of people. During his travels, in his late 20's, Murphy described how he came across a style of dance that had him hypnotized. After this first introduction, Murphy explained that he dedicated his vacation time, away from work, to continue to visit the city and take dance lessons. For Murphy, it was through his interest and pursuit of dance that he was introduced to a group of people that eventually became a large part of his social network. Murphy was able to connect with those with similar interests, which ultimately was the catalyst to some of the connections he holds dearest to him. Although unintentional, it was through his involvement in dance that Murphy built these significant relationships:

Because of the dancing and because I was teaching [dance] to the [locals], I made several friends that I am in touch with them for 15 years, more than 15 years, 25 years ... I met many people that dance, and they socialized besides the dancing with a community of dancers.

Cameron, too, reflected on some of her most significant relationships that began during her leisure time. Cameron described how her early years were filled with family trips to the lake,

attending Girl Guides, and singing in choirs at school and church. After moving away from home at 17, Cameron explained that without anything holding her in a particular place, her early adulthood was filled with moving across Canada to “see different places and meet different people”. Cameron recalled how her leisure at this time consisted of spending time with friends, attending parties, and going to concerts. Cameron described how she was able to maintain her social group as lots of her friends moved with her and she was able to make new friends quite easily. It was not until meeting her current partner, in her 40’s, that Cameron eventually settled down and moved into the house they have called home for the last 30 years. Though Cameron had travelled all over Canada, it was not until she entered retirement that changes in her financial stability had supported her investment in international travel. With the financial capacity to travel, Cameron was able to foster alignment with her desire to meet new people through her external patterns (leisure choices). Ultimately, Cameron explained that travelling was the one leisure pursuit she associates most with the meaningful relationships she has built through her leisure:

I like to travel in the older places, the older cities, and get out and walk around and meet people and talk to them and learn about their lives and that type of thing ... We’ve [my partner and I have] met lots of people through traveling ... [and] we [do] keep in touch with some of the people ... we’ve met on our travels.

### ***Facilitate Maintenance***

In addition to helping build their networks, many participants shared stories about how they utilized their leisure time to preserve existing connections with those around them. For many, sharing in leisure activities allowed them to engage with those close to them and maintain their social networks. For example, Raven recalled how changes in her geography impacted the

amount of time she is able to spend with friends that live in different provinces. Before they moved, Raven and her partner used to partake in a variety of annual events with their group of friends, such as card tournaments, barbecues, and making gingerbread houses. Since they no longer live in the same province as this specific group of friends, Raven described how continuing annual leisure activities allows her to reconnect with old friends:

There is a really good friend of ours who was gay, passed away from cancer ten years ago, and she started us every fall on making gingerbread houses. So we'd get together with all her past friends every year at our house and do it in early December, do a big turkey dinner. We all make a big gingerbread house in her honour, and then donate it to the daycare she used to work at ... In honour of our friend, who was very important to all of us and [is] still the glue that holds the same group of friends together.

Through engaging and sharing in leisure activities, Raven has been able to maintain her connection with her friends that she does not otherwise see. This leisure activity was a source of connection for Raven and allowed her to continue to align her internal values and honor her loved one.

Similar to Raven, Johnston recalled the contentment he feels when he is able to socialize during his leisure time. Johnston's participation in community-based recreation groups and organizations provided an opportunity to catch up with his friends: "I really love the social gathering ... and just that collective joy when we are seeing each other, having a coffee and a bagel ... it's so wonderful to see everyone and enjoy their company." For Johnston, a primary motivation for participating in his leisure activities of choice is the socialization inherently involved. His involvement in the leisure groups provided the settings where he can partake in conversation and share with the others.

Fisher described a similar function of his participation in a group of retired professionals, where he was able to maintain contact with those he used to work with. Fisher explained how his leisure time in his adulthood often had ties to his profession. He described the groups he was involved in, such as medical associations concerned with human rights and the rights of gays and lesbians, is where he volunteered his time outside of work. Fisher's role as a health care professional was a significant part of his identity and as such, Fisher recalled struggling with his transition into retirement. Through his participation in this recreational group, Fisher was able to maintain his internal patterns by seeking out opportunities to "talk shop" and reminisce with old colleagues:

It is the same of course with the [medical] club because we will do medical shop talk with those I worked with. The predominance in the [medical] club is also retirees ... that's been very important to maintain that contact.

Both participants' and practitioner stories exemplify how recreation and leisure services can provide an opportunity to meet new people and expand their networks. Foremost, recreation and leisure programs provided an opportunity for participants to come together over a shared activity and find a sense of belonging and community with one another. Fleetwood further highlighted how the social connection that many participants describe experiencing is often prioritized in her programs, regardless of the activity being offered:

They [the participants] seem to benefit from being part of the program and making relationships with other people ... [we have been] hearing a lot from people that it is just so nice to be together and feel a sense of community. And that, you know, it wasn't even that important what activities were available, or what was happening, it was just kind of like the opportunity to do something together that was so meaningful for people.

## **Consolidation of Interests, Values, and Leisure**

Pursuing one's interests and values through change and evolution was a theme in many of the participants stories. For some, leisure (conceptualized here as participant's free time) was discussed as an avenue consolidate their interests with their participation, through opportunities to experiment, establish, and pursue new interests. For others, they were able to consolidate their leisure with their values by participating in activities and efforts they felt were united with their personal priorities and values. Many participants shared stories about how their leisure time was a context for exploration, often evolving into a channel of access to activities and pursuits of interest.

### ***Leisure to Explore and Discover***

In their stories, participants explained how they utilized their leisure time to explore new activities and discover new interests and passions. Some recalled how their leisure pursuits were the conduit for further discovery of leisure they were most passionate about. For example, Murphy described how he was first introduced to the style of dance that eventually became one of his most meaningful leisure pursuits:

I wanted to visit a place that doesn't have European or American or Canadian tourists. And a friend of mine told me once he went to such a place. So I went there ... and all of a sudden, I saw medieval Spanish style centre of a city, with orchestra playing, mariachi singing, and people are dancing. The dance was incredible. I was looking like [I was] hypnotized on the whole thing.

Murphy's motivation to seek out unique travel destinations led him to discover his passion for dance. Murphy continued to invest in travel during his leisure time thereafter, to maintain his



involvement and ultimately achieve consolidation of his leisure pursuits and his newfound passion.

Similarly, Mitchell described how his leisure pursuits as a child had introduced him and allowed him to experiment with a range of art mediums. Mitchell has always considered himself an artist and he recalled how the camp he spent several summers at, as a child, gave him an opportunity to try new art forms:

I had [gone to] recreational camp as a child. We went to overnight camp ... they had all kinds of fun things to do in arts and crafts, painting, drawing, printmaking. They had everything, exposed me to a wide variety of different kinds of art. I particularly liked the enameling, I found that a lot of fun. We did wood carving, we did all kinds of things like that.

Mitchell explained that his medium of choice was always paint, however his experiences at camp allowed him to create and experiment with art in ways he had not been able to elsewhere. His time at a residential camp allowed Mitchell to practice applying his skills in a range of techniques. Mitchell was given an opportunity to explore his artistic abilities, influencing his motivation to pursue a career path as a professional artist.

Coming from a family that emphasized the importance of athletic ability, Davis's lack of skill when it came to hockey left him with poor self-esteem and searching for solace in other sports. Davis described how his involvement in a gay hockey league offered him an opportunity to rediscover hockey as an adult:

I thought well maybe I'll give it a try as an adult and see if it's different and I've never looked back. I just completed my 21st season in the [gay hockey league], I've been on the

executive, I've helped organize Pride events, helped organize our tournament, I've played in tournaments all over the world (laughs). I'm still not a very good player.

Davis was able to participate in the same sport that he had dreaded as a child, learning that his abilities were not a prerequisite for gratification. It was through his sense of connection to the community that Davis was willing to seek out and ultimately find enjoyment in a previously inauspicious leisure activity.

### *Means to Express Values*

For some participants, leisure activities introduced them to new passions, fostering opportunities to discover and expand upon their existing repertoire of interests and values. Moreover, the majority of participants described how their leisure choices were guided by personal values and priorities. Participants explained how the leisure activities or groups they sought out were resources for knowledge, contribution, and self-respect. For example, Andrews explained that his volunteer work with theatre companies and choral groups was how he engages with his love of the arts. Andrews recalled that although he focused on music throughout his career, his love for the theater prevailed. Through leisure, Andrews was able to align his external life (leisure choices) with his internal pattern (value of theater) to achieve satisfaction in his leisure pursuits:

I like the arts. I like theater and I like choral music. And I volunteer in these organizations, so that I can participate and see their performances and experience the lovely choral music.

Johnston described how the overt discrimination and oppression faced by the LGBTQ+ community had impacted how he used his leisure choices to express his values. Johnston

explained his motivation to support the community influenced the organizations he chose to become involved in and the spaces he sought out for recreation and leisure. Beginning when he first came out, Johnston utilized his recreation and leisure to seek out connection with the community and live a proud, visible life as a gay man:

The other organizations that I became involved with simply had to do with the emerging issue of human rights, in particular for gays and lesbians, after the bath house raids and our need for visibility and self respect and self identity by being out and involved and leading you know a very proudful life.

Johnston has made this selective investment in his leisure throughout his life, and he continues to volunteer for local committees, support organizations assist LGBT individuals seeking asylum, and regularly participate in a variety of community-based LGBTQ focused programs, as “a way to reconnect with the survivors”. Johnston’s selective investment in specific LGBT+ leisure organizations thus aligned with his internal pattern, helped him to achieve a positive self-concept.

For many, discovery and engagement with their passions and interests influenced their leisure choices. Practitioners drew parallel connections between participant engagement and the nature or subject of the program/activity being offered. For example, Balsam highlighted how recreational programs she facilitates have the potential to meet participants’ interests and provide a range of opportunities:

Just a whole range of different activities, but you know, I’ve learned from working with the participants of what they might be interested in. Plus, we also would ask them what are they interested in ... Now sometimes, it doesn’t work, like for some people it’s not a

fit, its not the kind of activities they were looking for ... If I know they're looking for something very specific and if I know it exists, then I would refer them because you want that person to be satisfied with wherever they're going to be.

Balsam described how having knowledge of other recreation programs and service providers helps her to direct participants to the services that may be better suited to their needs. Balsam draws attention to the potential that leisure service provision has to offer participants more than programs or services, but to facilitate connection to services that exist elsewhere in their community.

Murphy echoed Balsam's claim about the importance of understanding the needs of the audience, when he spoke about how he chooses programs to participate in. In his adulthood, Murphy recalled how he focused his leisure time on pursuing the activities that he enjoyed the most, dance. Murphy further described how his decision to retire early was motivated by his wishes to pursue his passions, such as playing music, travelling, and meeting new people. Murphy explained how his pursuit of passion was important to him because it is "meaningful to do what one likes". For Murphy, he made selective investment of his leisure time in specific programs available to him:

At the time, when I joined [the second community-based recreation program], I was already four times a week going to ... groups. By going, I mean literally joining them and you cannot be held every day. Four times a week is enough. So, I chose the programs that I like, and I stayed there.

Murphy explained how one program put on by the organization left him feeling "elated, like after yoga I feel very limpy and light". Once Murphy was able to achieve his ideal amount and type of

leisure in the programs that satisfied his interest, he no longer felt the need to seek out additional programs. Murphy demonstrates how older adults' internal patterns influence the ways in which they make selective investments in their leisure pursuits.

Overall, the themes of *Adaptation of leisure engagement*, *Social network augmentation*, and *Consolidation of interests, values, and leisure* draw on the stories and life experiences of older LGB adults to exemplify the ways they have been able to maintain their participation across their life course. Throughout their lives, participants' show how their ability to adapt and negotiate their leisure investments allowed them to manage the constraints to their recreation and leisure participation. Participants also drew attention to the social function of the programs and organizations they engaged with during their recreation and leisure, which allowed them to expand and diversify their social networks. Further, their stories implicate the breadth of interests and passions that community-based recreation and leisure services have an opportunity to serve and highlight how understanding these needs can help better serve diverse aging populations. The implications of participants' adaptive capacity and selective investment will be further explored in the following discussion section.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications**

The purpose of this research was to understand older LGB adults' experiences and perspectives of the constraints that influence their leisure participation in community-based recreation and leisure, and the role that community-based recreation and leisure services have in supporting participation throughout the lifespan. More specifically, this study sought to understand (1) how older LGB adults continue their recreation and leisure participation throughout their life course and (2) the role community-based recreation services play in supporting recreation participation among older LGB adults. The following section will discuss the implications of the findings and their contribution to the existing literature. The discussion will be structured around the two research questions to highlight how they were answered through the research process.

### **Older LGB Adults' Recreation Participation Across the Life Course**

Older LGB adults' stories described how they have been able to continue their participation, through constraint negotiation and purposeful, selective investments. These two concepts inform the following discussion. More specifically, older LGB adults were able to find ways to negotiate the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and structural constraints they faced when accessing recreation and leisure services. As well, participants' selective investment in purposeful recreation and leisure activities and programs supported their continued (although modified and/or adapted) participation in community-based recreation and leisure opportunities.

#### ***Constraint Negotiation***

Throughout the older LGB adults' life stories, it was clear that participants used adaptive strategies to manage the constraints they faced when trying to access and engage in recreation

and leisure activities. As explored in my findings, participants utilized their previous knowledge and experiences to manage such constraints, adapt accordingly, and effectively maintain their participation.

Continuity theory asserts that one's general patterns of thought and behaviour are motivated by the internal and external patterns individuals invest time and energy into developing (Atchley, 1999). An example of this was described throughout stories of participants' experiences during the AIDS epidemic, which influenced the ways that they invested their leisure time and subsequently caused a shift in their leisure preferences. Researchers categorize these participants as part of the 'pride' generation, who were part of the modern gay rights movements (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017). Ultimately, it was their need for respect and visibility that impacted their leisure choices. This is clearly shown in participants' adaptation and shifting leisure choices, specifically around the time that AIDS cases were increasing drastically (Warner, 2002).

Literature highlights how that time period saw an organizing of support for efforts to provide services for those diagnosed with AIDS, to provide preventative education, and advocacy for government awareness and funding (Warner, 2002). Participants' stories illuminated the impact of these experiences on their leisure participation, as some described which recreation and leisure pursuits they withdrew from, in order to make time to volunteer and take part in these efforts. Further, these historical, societal events continued to influence participants' selective investments and efforts to seek out LGBT-focused activities and organizations as they aged. For some, these programs and organizations provided an opportunity to connect with other survivors and find a sense of community among others with shared experiences. Thus, participants' experiences and needs were shaped during that period, and

continue to influence and have impact on the ways they seek out recreation and leisure services and organizations.

Furthermore, participants discussed experiencing intrapersonal constraints into their later life (as their social roles and leisure activities shifted), such as perceptions of a lack of appropriateness, and availability of activities. As previously discussed, Alexandris and colleagues (2003) reported that the presence of intrapersonal constraints negatively impacted older adults' motivation to continue their participation and was often associated with low participation levels. The findings of this study demonstrate how older LGB adults' age impacted the leisure organizations or groups that they sought out, in particular influencing their decisions to seek out 'senior-specific' events and programs.

Brennan-Ing and colleagues (2014) also reported that age-based stereotypes often limit the options older LGBT adults feel are available to them. However, participants discussed that they were able to make selective leisure investments in the activities they felt were available to them and were appropriate. Research shows that it is common for older adults to revisit their expectations of leisure, while reconsidering the opportunities available to them (Provencher & Poulin, 2020). Though participants explained their reconsideration of leisure activities, they did not describe perceptions of reduced opportunities or availability. The older LGB adults were able to adapt and seek out alternative leisure opportunities in their community, in place of the activities they felt no longer served them. As such, their ability to maintain their participation in recreation and leisure activities, for many, helped to establish a sense of stability and sense of self during transitional periods of their lives (Lund & Engelsrud, 2008; Boule et al., 2020).

Participants also experienced intrapersonal constraints related to their health status, that influenced their perception of ability as they aged. During times of health decline, there was a



significant impact to participants' leisure choices and continuity. Perceptions of self-skill and ability were key factors that impeded their participation (Cho et al., 2017; Carbonneau et al., 2020). Yet, participants' negotiation strategies helped them to seek out other leisure pursuits that best aligned with their internal patterns. These leisure opportunities, especially those in familiar environments such as volunteering, helped the older LGB adults to achieve a sense of purpose and contribution. This can be especially important as retirement and experiences of aging can leave older adults with feelings of uselessness or reduced meaning in life (Massie & Meisner, 2019).

For all of the participants, there was a very distinct relationship between their age and their leisure preferences, the ways they sought out leisure, and the outcomes of their leisure participation. More specifically, experiences of ageism and internalized ageist beliefs negatively influenced the sense of belonging they felt when seeking out leisure activities. These findings support the work of Massie and Meisner (2019) who reported that perceptions of aging, experiences of ageism, and personal beliefs about stereotypes of aging negatively impact their self-esteem and lead to altered, diminished preferences and participation among older adults. However, participants were able to adapt to these shifts by seeking out alternative services that better aligned with their preferences and perception of ability. So, although older LGB adults described increasing constraints as they age, they were able to adapt their external patterns (leisure choices) in order to satisfy their evolving needs (internal patterns).

Structural constraints to recreation and leisure were also described throughout the older LGB adults' lives, which changed as they transitioned through life stages. During early adulthood, financial constraints were a concern for many participants as they did not have the resources for leisure pursuits that required a financial commitment. Additionally, older LGB

adults mentioned experiencing structural constraints during early to mid-adulthood, as they balanced a series of obligations. It was often employment or education-related commitments that provoked their negotiation, as they experienced a shift in their personal priorities. However, the structural constraints that participants discussed were often transitory and did not have adverse impacts on the overall continuity of their recreation and leisure across the life course. Rather, by adjusting their external patterns (leisure choices), some participants were able to expand their leisure repertoire. For others, by modifying their recreation and leisure participation, they were able to mediate the impact of the constraint and maintain a reasonable level of engagement.

Additionally, support from their social network enabled participants to seek out leisure in alternative spaces, often in informal times, in order to overcome these structural constraints. Participants described how they were able to negotiate or modify their participation to mediate the presence of constraints by seeking out leisure with the support of friends. These findings align with the work of Carter and Baliko (2017) that report queer leisure spaces are often constructed in alternative, less commercial, more community-based spaces that tend to be temporary, shared spaces. As well, these findings imply that older LGB adults have been able to rely on their support networks to foster continuity in their recreation and leisure participation during times of adaptation, from early on in their adult lives.

### ***Purposeful, Selective Investments***

In addition to constraint negotiation, participants were able to maintain their participation by utilizing their leisure time in ways that positively contributed to their quality of life. Participants' selective investments and adaptive capacity helped to achieve satisfaction in their leisure pursuits and maintain their participation in leisure activities that upheld their sense of fulfilment.

The older LGB adults considered recreation and leisure services and organizations to be a space to connect with those similar to themselves and expand their social connections. The opportunity to socialize was important to participants, as socialization was a characteristic strongly associated with their descriptions of ideal recreation and leisure. Participants utilized their leisure activities to both develop new connections and strengthen pre-existing relationships. Contrary to previous studies (Toepoel, 2013; Fokkema & Kuiper, 2009), participants had extensive social networks and were deeply connected to their local communities. Their local leisure programs and organizations were an essential source of social interaction (Gough et al., 2021), which is important for outcomes related to social integration and social connectedness (Toepoel, 2013). Participants utilized these services to expand their networks, as well as maintain existing connections, which can be important for older LGB adults as they age. These findings draw attention to significance of connection and socialization for older LGB adults, specifically among networks that provide a variety of meaningful activities and promote a sense of camaraderie with similar others (Putney et al., 2018; Cummings et al., 2021).

Achieving continuity of relationships and support networks is also important for maintaining concepts of self and lifestyle (Atchley, 1999). For these participants, their recreation and leisure activities were seen as an opportunity to (re)connect with their community as they age, further aiding their ability to uphold their sense of self and connection to the queer community. Although the ways participants engaged with their community evolved, the older LGB adults were able to maintain consistency across their general patterns, of relationships and networks within the LGBT+ community, over time and supported such through their recreation and leisure choices.

Their involvement in recreation and leisure activities was also associated with positive outcomes such as sense of belonging, contribution, and purpose. Volunteering was an important part of participants' leisure pursuits. For many, volunteering was an significant part of their lives during the AIDS epidemic, that allowed them to support their community in a time of crisis. Others associated volunteering with involvement in, and contribution to, local organizations and groups (Yoon et al., 2021; Hutchinson & Gallant, 2016; Lan Fang et al., 2016). This was particularly important for participants during their transition to retirement, as it allowed them to engage with organizations of interest. Volunteering opportunities thus can act twofold by providing opportunities to participate in activities that align with their interests and values, while encouraging positive outcomes such as sense of purpose, civic engagement, and contribution (Jongenelis & Pettigrew, 2020). These findings highlight how older LGB adults utilized volunteer opportunities to achieve a sense of contribution and purpose, which can be especially important during transitional periods associated with aging, to help promote self-confidence, life satisfaction, and social connectedness (Yoon et al., 2021; Cho et al., 2017; Toepoel, 2013).

Throughout their lives, the older LGB adults were able to find and participate in leisure activities that successfully aligned with their evolving interests and values. For some, leisure pursuits were the conduit for discovery, helping them to learn more about themselves and further establish a sense of self (Jacobson & Samdahl, 1998). Some participants discussed how having access to a variety of recreation and leisure opportunities allowed them to experiment and subsequently discover new passions and interests. Especially in their early years, recreation and leisure often provided opportunity to learn a new skill or try out a different activity. Whereas for others, leisure activities were the means through which they were able to engage with and express their values in a meaningful way. For example, many participants utilized LGBT+

spaces to help establish their sense of self and connection to their community after coming out. By consolidating their leisure pursuits with their interests and values, participants were motivated to find strategies that supported their continued participation (Lund & Engelsrud, 2008). Overall, these findings support previous work that has been done to understand the role of leisure in the lives of older LGB adults (Boule et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2017; Mock & Hummel, 2012), and contribute a more contextualized insight into how older LGB adults experience and subsequently negotiate constraints imposed on their participation in recreation and leisure.

### **Role of Community-based Recreation Services**

Across participants' stories, the findings of this study exemplify the various functions that community-based recreation and leisure services can play in the lives of older LGB adults. It was clear that the role of community services was highly dependent on the individual, more specifically associated with their social role and/or the purpose of their recreation and leisure engagement. For example, participants utilized community-based recreation and leisure services as a space to connect with those around them. Many participants sought out the programs (often LGBT+ specific) that helped them to connect with similar others. Whereas, in their later life, participants involvement in community-based organizations shifted to 'senior-specific' programs to mediate intrapersonal constraints related to perceived appropriateness. Overall, recreational programs offered by community-based organizations were predominantly considered to be sources of connection (Toepoel, 2013).

Practitioners further discussed how community-based services have the potential to act as a space for meeting new people, while also engaging with those in pre-existing networks. Research shows that these spaces can be especially important, as participation in recreational activities can combat social isolation and promote feelings of belonging and a sense of

community (Freire, 2013). These findings further support this work, exemplifying how the recreation and leisure services that older LGB adults are accessing are an important resource for community and belonging (Gough et al., 2021; Hutchinson & Gallant, 2016).

It should be noted that participants described seeking out older adult or senior-specific programs and organizations as they aged, however the organizations they discussed accessing were mostly LGBT+ specific. The older LGB adults in this study did not report participating in or considering aging services, such as mainstream older adult centres. These findings may be related to the function of the older LGB adults' leisure, which often was to socialize and connect with similar others. Additionally, these findings could be related to the study's recruitment process, which will be discussed further below.

The community-based recreation services that participants sought out were implicated in a variety of pursuits, including but not limited to, volunteering, physical exercise, and educational opportunities. Practitioners also discussed how it is important to consider the older adults' interests and how their changing needs must be considered to provide appropriate programs and services. This would include understanding the constraints that people face when seeking out recreation and leisure services as older adults, and as sexual minorities (Barbosa & Liechty, 2018; Addis et al., 2009; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017c). For example, one practitioner described how they prioritized finding ways to provide programs that allowed older LGB adults to participate in recreation and leisure with dignity as they aged. The provision of accessible services can help older LGB adults maintain continuity of their recreation and leisure activities, without having to negotiate constraints on their own. Modified options for participation can be particularly important as older LGB adults reinterpret the activities that are appropriate and available to them. These findings support the work of Cummings and colleagues

(2021) that described the importance of accessible options to partake in LGBT+ community-specific events, such as Pride, as it can help to honor them as members of the broader LGBT+ community. Additionally, recreation and leisure programs and services that promote such a connection to the community can be especially important, as discussed by participants, to provide opportunities that address their need for visibility and representation (Mock & Hummel, 2012).

Older LGB adults also described the expansive range of activities that they seek out via recreation and leisure services. Participants discussed how the programs and services allowed them to explore areas of interest and engage with their passions, from educational resources to physical activity classes. For some, the range of activities available helped them foster continuity in their lives, returning to activities that they had participated in or enjoyed in their childhood. These findings align with previous studies that suggest older LGB adults are interested in a wide variety of educational and recreational programs (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014).

Further, participants described the enjoyment and value of educational programs that they sought out, offered by the community-based recreation and leisure organizations. Literature highlights how older LGBT adults are often reluctant to seek out aging and health care services due to anticipated discrimination and prejudice (Wilson et al., 2019). Participants described seeking out educational services from these community-based organizations, highlighting the potential that these service providers have to supplement access to information and resources older LGB adults feel unable to seek out elsewhere. These findings may contribute to the literature by drawing attention to the role that community-based recreation and leisure services can play in facilitating access to educational supports for older LGB adults.

## **Theoretical Implications**

This study highlights the compatibility between the leisure constraints model and continuity theory, in studies of leisure choices and preferences across the life course. Leisure constraints, especially intrapersonal constraints, have a direct impact on leisure preferences subsequently impacting individual leisure choices (Alexandris et al., 2003). This is especially relevant for populations, such as older LGB adults, that face constraints related to both sexual orientation and age (Provencher & Carbonneau, 2019; Brennan-Ing et al., 2014; Mock & Hummel, 2012). Thus, understanding continuity in these individuals' lives must consider the cultural and sociopolitical climates across their life courses (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010).

Through this research, it has been demonstrated how the leisure lives of older LGB adults can be examined through the model of leisure constraints. Especially as these adults age, older LGB adults are subject to constraints in similar ways to their heterosexual peers while navigating additional constraints imposed on them, such as ageist segregation from younger generations, fear of identity disclosure in aging services and care facilities, and expectations of marginalization (Lecompte et al., 2020, Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010; King, 2013; Roe & Galvin, 2020). These findings serve to exemplify how constraints impact older LGB adults' ability to achieve continuity, and how they understand and seek out recreation and leisure opportunities. It can be noted that the resiliency that these individuals develop through past experiences of discrimination impacts their capacity to adapt to change and adversity in ways that their heterosexual counterparts may not (Brotman et al., 2003; Van Wagenen et al., 2013). Participants stories exemplify how experiences of discrimination and marginalization may



influence how older LGB adults' seek out community-based recreation and leisure services, and subsequently how they adapt their participation when faced with constraints.

These findings also serve as an example of how older LGB adults use their recreation and leisure to assist with positively adapting as they age. Older LGB adults are seeking out recreation and leisure activities that provide them with a sense of purpose and contribution, with specific emphasis on such as they transition to retirement. For example, some participants sought out volunteer opportunities in familiar environments, such as theatre groups and a pet therapy program, which helped to achieve continuity in their environment and foster a sense of purpose. Realities of recreation participation and leisure choices among older adults can help to inform a more nuanced understanding of social aging (Laher, 2017). Their participation in these roles (i.e., volunteering) can be used to understand how older LGB adults continue to seek out ways to contribute and engage with their local society as they age and challenge the ageist notion that adults take on a diminished role as they exit the workforce (Karev & Doron, 2017). These findings provide insight into how recreation and leisure programs and organizations can provide volunteer opportunities for older adults that encourage a sense of purpose and contribution, while helping to achieve continuity in their activities, relationships, and/or environments.

Although this study used continuity theory as its theoretical framework, there are other frameworks that may be considered to understand older LGB adults' participation in recreation and leisure across the lifespan. For example, Activity Theory (Havinghurst & Albrecht, 1953), that highlights the positive connection between activity levels and happiness in older adults (Gonot-Schoupsinsky et al., 2022), and the Model of Selective Optimization with Compensation (Baltes & Baltes, 1990), that suggests successful aging can be understood as reducing losses and maximizing gains (Gonot-Schoupsinsky et al., 2022); these theories may serve as a useful lens to

consider and explore the realities of older LGB aging experiences and provide more holistic and interdisciplinary analyses that would complement the findings from my research.

### **Practical Implications**

The study also provides insight into how older LGB adults utilize community-based recreation and leisure services to satisfy a variety of needs (i.e., socialization, belonging, contribution). This implies that there is an opportunity for recreation and leisure service providers to capitalize on, to ensure that their organizations and programs are intentionally fostering spaces where older LGB adults can fulfill these needs.

However, members of the aging LGB population do have unique needs that must be considered in recreation service provision. Practitioners who currently engage older LGBT adults reinforced the importance of contextual understandings and modifications to meet their needs and adequately serve the aging LGBT population (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017). As such, a ‘one size fits all’ approach to the inclusion of these older adults is not realistic, as their understanding and utilization of recreation and leisure services is directly influenced by their own life experiences. However, a commitment to inclusion and promotion of safe spaces may help to foster feelings of belonging and acceptance in spaces they may not typically seek out (Lecompte et al., 2020; King, 2013). These findings allude to the importance of these steps towards inclusion in recreation and leisure service provision in order to foster perceptions of belonging and acceptance across community-based resources, which further supports previous research that highlights how increasing cultural competency can be translated through its programs and services (Rich & Breunig, 2022).

This study also shows how older LGB adults' participation in recreation and leisure services was tied to their need for visibility and respect. For many, involvement in LGBT-specific serving organizations was a priority, as research shows, to help promote perceptions of safety and belonging in those spaces (Cummings et al., 2021). These findings represent important considerations for practitioners and policy makers that engage with older LGB adults, as their preferences reflect their unique contextual experiences of discrimination and marginalization (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010). Older LGB adults are seeking out recreation and leisure spaces and opportunities in ways that honor who they are, both as a sexual minority and as an older adult. This intersectionality must be considered when serving this population, as their leisure engagement is influenced by various constraints related to these aspects of their identities. Researchers suggest that service providers and staff must enhance their competency in order to provide inclusive and affirmative policies and practices (King, 2013; Rich & Breunig, 2022). This may be achieved by enhancing staff training and education to cover LGBT-specific issues and discuss ways to improve practices such as by including language that engages members of the LGB community (Lecompte et al., 2020; Roe & Galvin, 2020; Wilson et al., 2018). Studies highlight that for organizations and personnel to be competent, they must have knowledge related to LGB realities so that they are able to link this knowledge through the delivery of their practices (Lecompte et al., 2020). In order to achieve inclusivity for older LGB adults, it is crucial for recreation and leisure service providers to consider the complex, intersectional needs of the population as sexual minorities and as older adults, as well as how these needs change and evolve throughout the life course.

The older LGB adults in this study engaged in a wide range of activities during their recreation and leisure time (Brennan-Ing et al., 2014). This finding offers insight into the breath

of interests that older LGB adults pursue in their leisure and can encourage service providers to consider how aging LGB adults are seeking out supports and resources through recreation and leisure service networks. It is important to understand that older LGB adults' experiences of aging are diverse and unique compared to their heterosexual counterparts, and past discrimination reduces the likelihood they will seek out the supports that they need from health services and systems (Barbosa & Liechty, 2018; Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010; Boule et al., 2020; Harley & Teaster, 2016). Practitioners highlighted the importance of considering the audience during program design and delivery, as meeting the needs of such a disparate population can be challenging. The findings from this study support calls for using strategies to enhance older LGB adults' participation or input into program planning in order to foster congruency between the services offered and older LGB needs (Pardasani & Thompson, 2012).

## Chapter 7: Limitations & Future Directions

In this chapter, I discuss the limitations of this study in efforts to contextualize the implications of my work and how future research may build upon it. One limitation to this study was that due to the study's recruitment strategy in which participants were recruited through community-based recreation and leisure organizations, the study participants were older LGB adults who were already involved and able to access the resources in their community. This approach to recruitment resulted in a lack of insight from participants that had little or no participation in these types of services and the experiences or constraints that frame dis- or non-engagement. As such, these findings do not represent a comprehensive picture of older LGB adults' recreation and leisure participation.

It should be noted that there were discrepancies in the level of participation among community-based recreation and leisure services across participants' stories. However, as influenced by the recruitment strategy, there was not enough data to make conclusions related to how community-based recreation and leisure services may support the participation of those who are not currently involved or in contact with these types of organizations already. Although I requested that participants share the information to attract more participants from those networks, this resulted in very limited response from additional potential participants and of those, they would have been individuals who were also already involved. Participants' ability to develop and sustain extensive networks in their local community, particularly with recreation and leisure organizations and service providers, may have enhanced their ability to seek out alternative options as needed. This must be considered when understanding how these participants were able to access and maintain their participation.

A second limitation to this study was the lack of gender diversity among participants. All the participants were cis-gender, thus limiting the contribution of these findings to understanding experiences of transgender, Two-Spirit, and non-binary individuals. As well, most the participants (75%) were males who identified as homosexual or gay, that lived in urban communities, with the other two participants identifying as female (one identified as bisexual, the other identified as lesbian). Again, this limits the findings of this study as it depicts experiences of a predominantly homogenous group of older LGB adults. It should be noted that the historical context and oppression with research and community-based recreation services more broadly must be considered, as these experiences implicate specific challenges to reaching and recruiting individuals of diverse genders. As well, differences between geographic contexts, such between urban and rural, were not specifically addressed within the scope of this study. Although, these are crucial factors when trying to understand how diverse sexual minorities are able maintain their participation across their life course and the role community-based services may take on within diverse community contexts (e.g., see Mair, 2009; Rich & Misener, 2019).

### **Future Directions**

That said, this study's findings support the establishment of several future directions and opportunities for research. It is clear that the life experiences of the aging LGB population influence how they come to understand and seek out the recreation and leisure services available to them. To achieve a more nuanced understanding, there is opportunity to further investigate the experiences a wider array of identities within the LGBTQ+ community, as older adults' experiences related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, respectively, all influence the ways in which they seek out recreation and leisure services (Barbosa & Liechty, 2018). It is important to consider the perspectives of gender diverse

identities to further understand how their life experiences influence how their recreation and leisure is maintained throughout their life course, and how they access community-based recreation and leisure services.

These findings also highlight the role of previous experiences, especially related to times of crisis (i.e., the AIDS epidemic), in shaping recreation and leisure needs and subsequent choices of older LGB adults. Studies using continuity theory often focus on how older adults can maintain continuity into their later life. Further, continuity theory may also provide a useful lens to understand how socio-political contexts impact participation during the specific time period(s) and/or life stage(s), and in so doing would offer insight into how those experiences shape leisure preferences as individuals age.

Additionally, these findings show that older LGB adults did not perceive a reduction in their recreation and leisure opportunities as they aged. Perceptions could be linked to their geographic location or potentially their extensive social networks; however, these factors were not specifically addressed in this study. Future research may expand on these findings to further investigate the specific factors that contribute to older LGB perceptions of availability and access to recreation and leisure activities and services, or to understand the constraints (intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal) that shape perceptions of availability and opportunity of recreation and leisure for older LGB adults.

Lastly, future studies could seek to engage with members of the LGB community that are not currently engaged with community-based recreation and leisure services. This would help to further contextualize the realities of diverse aging, and further contextualize the role that community-based recreation and leisure services takes on. More specifically, the role of community-based organizations could further be explored to compare the role of LGBT-specific

versus “mainstream” organizations and services, in supporting the participation of older LGB adults across their lifespan. As alluded to above, this future line of inquiry may consider the role of cultural competence and safety (Rich & Breunig, 2022) as well as trauma-informed approaches to service provision (Darroch et al., 2020). This would be especially interesting with consideration of when these LGBT-specific services/organizations originated and how access to them has evolved, further implicating their impact and role in older LGB adults’ participation in recreation and leisure services.

## **Conclusion**

Using narrative inquiry and continuity theory, this study’s purpose was to understand older LGB adults’ perspectives and experiences of the constraints that influenced their participation in community-based recreation and leisure participation, and the role that community-based recreation and leisure services played in supporting participation throughout the lifespan. The findings illustrate that older LGB participants have experienced lives of resilience and adaptation to achieve continuity in their participation in recreation and leisure pursuits. In general, older LGB adults chose to pursue specific recreation and leisure activities that allowed them to socialize with similar others, provide opportunity to engage with their passions, and aligned with their external life. Community-based recreation and leisure services take on a dynamic role among these individuals’ recreation and leisure pursuits and have the potential to be an essential resource for promoting stability, connection, contribution, and continuity among older LGB adults. Previous knowledge and experiences are crucial when understanding the participation patterns of older LGB adults. This research provides an important contribution to promote stories of positive aging, resiliency, and visibility of older LGB adults.



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## **Appendix A: Interview Guide – Older LGB Adults**

Hello, my name is Emily Romano, and I am a graduate student at Brock University. Before we begin, I just want to thank you for agreeing to take the time to speak with me today.

I would like to go over a few important items before we start. I am interested in hearing your stories and life experiences, with the intention to better understand your recreation and leisure participation across your lifespan. I do have prepared questions that I would like to ask you, so that you will have the opportunity to share your perspectives and life experiences. If there are any questions that you are not comfortable answering, please let me know and we can skip over them. You may also choose to stop the interview at any point. Anything that you share with me today will be kept confidential and your name will not be identified in any way.

Do you consent to participate in this interview?

To make sure I have a clear description of what you share today, I would like to audio record our conversation. Are you comfortable with me audio recording the interview?

[If the participant does not agree to audio recording, notes will be taken in place of the recording.]

Before we start, do you have any questions?

Okay, great. I have a few questions that are intended to establish some background information.

How old are you?

How would you identify your gender identity? What are your preferred pronouns?

How would you identify your sexual orientation?

Tell me a bit about yourself?

- ➔ Where are you from?
- ➔ What do you like to do to keep busy?
- ➔ What does leisure mean to you?
- ➔ Why do you think recreation/leisure is important?

### **Early years**

Can you tell me about your earliest memories of leisure?

- ➔ What do you remember most about those experiences/ activities?
- ➔ How would you describe your leisure time during your childhood? Your teenage years?
- ➔ What did you do for fun/entertainment?
- ➔ What clubs, groups, or organizations were you involved in?



### **Middle-age life**

How would you describe your leisure as you transitioned in adulthood?

- ➔ What else was going on in your life at that time?
- ➔ Can you recall some of your most enjoyable memories of leisure as an adult?
- ➔ During this time, can you tell me about where you went to seek out leisure?

### **Later life**

What do you do with your time now?

- ➔ Do you have any daily routines or practices?
- ➔ How would you describe your leisure now?
- ➔ Looking back, are there any leisure activities that you'd like to get back into?

### **Major life themes**

When you think of leisure, what are some of the things you think about?

- ➔ Can you describe any significant relationships that you associate with your leisure time?
- ➔ Can you tell me a story of your most positive leisure experiences?
  - What made those times most enjoyable?
  - What are some memories you hope to never forget?
- ➔ How would you describe your “perfect” recreation/leisure?

[The first interview will focus on the above questions (time permitting). The second interview will revisit the initial guide if needed. Following those questions, the guide below will be used to structure the second interview.]

Okay, so just jumping off from where we left off in the last interview. I have a few questions intended to make sure I fully understand the stories you've shared with me.

I now would like to explore further into your experiences in community-based programs and centres.

Can you tell me about the places you go to when you seek out recreation and leisure?

- ➔ Why do you choose those specific centres/programs/organizations?
- ➔ How did you come to learn about those centres/programs/organizations?
- ➔ Are there specific programs you seek out?

What are some characteristics you look for when you are seeking out recreation and leisure programs?

- ➔ Are there specific characteristics you avoid when deciding whether you want to participate?

Can you tell me about the programs/centres you enjoy the most?

- ➔ What made those programs/centres stand out from others?
- ➔ What recommendations would you make to those organizations/centres to improve your experience?

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide - Practitioners**

Hello, my name is Emily Romano, and I am a graduate student at Brock University. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today.

Before we start, I would like to go over a few important items. I have prepared questions that I would like to ask you, so that you will have the opportunity to share your perspectives and life experiences. If there are any question that you are not comfortable answering, please let me know and we can skip over them. You may also choose to stop the interview at any point. As well, any information you share with me in the interview today will be kept confidential and your name will not be identified in any way.

Do you consent to participate in this interview?

To ensure I have a clear description of what you share here today, I would like to audio record our conversation. Are you comfortable with me audio recording the interview?

[If the participant does not agree to audio recording, notes will be taken in place of the recording.]

Do you have any questions before we begin?

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

What is your position at [organization/center]?

Please tell me a bit about your experience with your organization/centre.

→ How long have you been involved there? In what capacities?

→ What are some of your responsibilities as a [position title]?

Who are the people you would interact with on a regular basis?

→ How would you describe the relationship that you have with members of your organization/centre?

### **Diverse members**

Do you have experience working with LGBT Older adults? Can you tell me about it?

→ What type of training have you received regarding working with members of the LGBT community?

→ How comfortable do you feel working with/aiding older LGBT individuals?

→ What are some of the common challenges you encounter with this population?

→ What are some of the successes or positive experiences you have seen or been a part of with this population?

Older LGBT adults may have difference experiences of aging, compared to their heterosexual counterparts. How would you describe your level of knowledge regarding issues facing older LGBT adults?

### **Organizational characteristics**

Can you tell me about the programs and services offered by your organization/centre?

- Are there any efforts or activities specifically held for older LGBT adults?
- Does your organization provide materials or information specifically designed for older LGBT adults?
- What aspects of organizations or programs do you think are most important for older LGBT adults? Why?

What do you feel are some strengths your organization has when working with older LGBT adults? What are some challenges?

- Older LGBT adults face specific constraints to recreation and leisure participation based on both their sexual orientation and their age. Are there specific strategies or initiatives used to promote inclusivity in your centre(s) for specifically **older** LGBT populations?
- Many older LGBT adults have smaller networks than their heterosexual peers. Does your organization/centre have any specific strategies or initiatives used to reach older LGBT adults?

## Appendix C: Email Correspondence Script

### Introductory Email

Subject Line: Looking for Participants for Older LGBT Adult Research

Body:

Hello,

My name is Emily Romano, and I am a Master's student working under the supervision of Dr. Kyle Rich, in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University. I am contacting you to request for [name of organization/agency] assistance with a project I am conducting as a part of my Master's degree. I am conducting research to explore older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) adults' perspectives and experiences related to community-based recreation and leisure.

I am looking for your assistance to connect with older LGBT adults who are engaged in community-based recreation and leisure settings, such as your programs and services. As well, I am hoping to recruit practitioners/volunteers who work with older LGBT adults in such community-based recreation and leisure contexts.

If you would like more details about this study, please contact myself, Emily Romano, by email at er15ia@brocku.ca or by phone at (905) 447-0982.

I hope that the results of this research will be of benefit to [name of organization/agency], to your participants and to the LGBT community, as well as the broader research community. I very much look forward to speaking with you. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Emily Romano

Kyle Rich

Master's Candidate

Assistant Professor

905 447 0982

krich@brocku.ca

er15ia@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (REB file number 21-114).

**Follow-up Email**

If responded, LOOKING FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Body:

Hello,

Thank you for your interest in my project. Please see the attached document for the letter of information, which outlines all the specific details of the study.

Your participation in this project would involve providing suitable individuals with the information about how to participate in my research. As outlined in the letter of information, I am looking for both older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adults engaged in the community-based recreation and leisure setting, and practitioners/volunteers who have experience working closely with older LGBT populations in a community-based recreation and leisure context.

Should you choose to participate, you will be provided with letters of invitation and consent form that can be forwarded to any potential participants.

If you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to reach out to myself.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Emily Romano  
Master's Candidate  
905 447 0982  
er15ia@brocku.ca

Kyle Rich  
Assistant Professor  
krich@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (REB file number 21-114).

If YES WANT TO PARTICIPATE:

Hello!

Thank you for agreeing to assist our research. Please see the attached document for the letters of invitation that can be forwarded along to any relevant individuals.

If any individuals or yourself, have any further questions about the study, you can get in contact with myself and I will be happy to answer any questions that may arise. Thank you for your support in this project, looking forward to connecting with you further on in this project.

Thank you,

Emily Romano

Master's Candidate

905 447 0982

er15ia@brocku.ca

Kyle Rich

Assistant Professor

krich@brocku.ca

If NOT INTERESTED:

Hello there,

Thank you for your time and consideration. If in future, you do want to participate in this project, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,

Emily Romano

Master's Candidate

905 447 0982

er15ia@brocku.ca

Kyle Rich

Assistant Professor

krich@brocku.ca

**Email Correspondence with older LGBT adults**

IF YES, WANT TO PARTICIPATE:

Thank you for agreeing to assist our research! Please see the attached document for the informed consent letter, which outlines the specific details of your participation in my project.

The next step is to set up a time for your first interview. It should take no longer than 1 hour and will be held over the phone. My schedule is quite flexible, so please let me know if there are specific times that work best for you in the coming weeks!

Looking forward to connecting further! Thank you for your time.

Emily Romano  
Master's Candidate  
905 447 0982  
er15ia@brocku.ca

Kyle Rich  
Assistant Professor  
krich@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (REB file number 21-114).



## FOLLOW UP RESPONSE:

Hello [name],

I am available at [time] on [specific date] if that works for you. The interview will be held over the phone.

If you could just confirm that time and provide a phone number that is best to reach you at, that would be great!

Looking forward to connecting!

Emily

905 447 0982

Er15ia@brocku.ca

## Appendix D: Letter of Information – Community-Based Centres

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

[Date]

Dear [insert name],

This letter is a request for [name of organization]'s assistance with a project I am conducting as a part of my Master's degree in the Department of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University, under the supervision of Dr. Kyle Rich. The title of my research is "Diverse Stories: Understanding Recreation and Leisure in Older LGBT Lives". I would like to provide you with more information about this project that explores older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adults' experiences and perspectives related to their own recreation and leisure participation.

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of older LGBT adults' perspectives and experiences of the influences that are key to maintaining their participation in community-based recreation and leisure. The knowledge and information generated from this project may help community-based recreation and leisure service providers better serve the diverse, aging population in order to support recreation and leisure participation, and ultimately wellbeing, across the lifespan.

It is my intention to connect with both older LGBT adults who are engaged in the programs provided by [organization/agency name] and employees or volunteers who are engaged in the programs that serve/work with older LGBT adults to invite them to participate in this research project. I believe that the participants of your programs have unique understandings and stories relating to recreation and leisure engagement across the lifespan. As well, I believe that the employees and volunteers have unique understandings and stories relating to recreation and leisure engagement among older LGBT adults. At the end of this study, the publication of this thesis will share the knowledge from this study with other leisure researchers, leisure programmers, and community members. I hope that the results of my research will be beneficial to [organization/agency name], to other recreation and leisure service providers, and to the older LGBT adults and their communities.

To respect the privacy and right of [organization/agency name], its participants, and employees/volunteers, I will not be contacting any individuals directly. What I intend to do is provide the [organization/agency name] with letters of invitation to be distributed by [organization/agency name] at their discretion. Contact information for myself and my supervisor will be provided in the letter. If an individual is interested in participating, they are invited to contact me, Emily Romano, to discuss participation in this study in further detail.

All contact with individuals interested in the study will be conducted over the telephone or by email. Should individual choose to participate, all interviews will be conducted over the telephone or using Microsoft Teams.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received clearance from Brock University's Research Ethics Board. However, the final decision about involvement in recruitment efforts belongs to [organization/agency name].

Please pass along this information the individuals who have experience working/volunteering with older LGBT adults in a community-based recreation and leisure setting. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact myself, Emily Romano by telephone at 905-447-0982 or by email at er15ia@brocku.ca.

With gratitude,

Emily Romano  
Master's Candidate  
905 447 0982  
er15ia@brocku.ca

Kyle Rich  
Assistant Professor  
613 857 6462  
krich@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (REB file number 21-114).

## Appendix E: Research Poster

## DIVERSE STORIES: UNDERSTANDING RECREATION & LEISURE IN OLDER LGBT LIVES

**Are you...**

65 years of age or older?

A member of the LGBT community?

Engaged in local recreation & leisure  
activities/programs?



**\*If you answered yes to all of the above,  
come take part in our research study!**



**Share your stories  
and help inform how recreation &  
leisure service providers  
can better serve you!**

Looking for more information?

Contact Emily Romano here:



er15ia@brocku.ca

or Dr. Kyle Rich (krich@brocku.ca)

Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University