*J.L.H. BIRKLAND. **Use of ICTs in leisure by older adults: Intensive semi-structured interview case studies.** Gerontechnology 2012;11(2):398;* doi:10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.273.00 **Purpose** The purpose of this study was to understand how and why information and communication technologies (ICTs) are used in leisure by older adults of the younger half of the Lucky Few generation (born from 1936-1946 in the United States)[1]. Previous research has explored if and how ICTs are used as leisure[2], however; little is known about how ICTs are used to supplement leisure activities. **Method** A series of intensive interpretive comparative case studies[3-4] were completed with older adults and members of their social networks to understand what, how, and why older adults of the Lucky Few generation were using ICTs in their leisure lives. Ten cases have been completed. Each case is comprised of 3 two-hour interviews with an older adult and 2-3 one-hour interviews with friends, family, and coworkers close to the older adult. Cases were compared to understand if there were differences between males and females, education levels, and other emerging factors. Using a phenomenological interactionist[3] analysis method, emerging themes were also analyzed from the cases. Older adults ranged from very savvy tech-users to individuals who did not own or know how to operate a computer. Ten more cases are planned. **Results & Discussion** Gender specific differences in ICT-use in leisure emerged from the study. Women emphasized the ability of ICTs to connect them to others and allow them to socialize; men tended to emphasize the ability for ICTs to allow them to escape and have alone time (this finding is similar to previous studies of middle aged adults)[5]. However, a novel theme that emerged was that women tended to have negative viewpoints of ICT use in leisure that was seen as being isolating and detracting from the social experience. The "value" of the use of an ICT for leisure was judged in terms of the ICT's ability to socially involve others. Therefore games which reduced an activity from a social/ group event to a single-player experience were seen negatively by most of the female participants. If single-player games were used as part of a larger social experience with other players, this was seen as a positive use of an otherwise isolating game: one woman who lived in assisted living loved playing Wii bowling on game night with several other residents because it was a social activity that brought residents together. Women also tended to play interactive games with people at a distance (such as bridge), particularly when no one in their immediate friends or family were interested in playing games. In one case, a woman formed several long-term friendships through playing online games, which eventually led to shared vacations together. Men tended to not play games or use ICTs as leisure; however, when they did they mainly played single-player games, often playing in competition with themselves and setting goals to "beat". All participants tended to use ICTs to supplement their leisure activities: to coordinate outings with friends, to register and find information for events, to find out information about their hobbies, and even to purchase hobby supplies. Oftentimes use of an ICT in leisure led to that ICT being used in other areas of life, including their community involvement, family life, and work. Topics discovered online were often discussed between friends, with ICTs being used to start or continue the conversation about topics. Overall, significant differences were seen between men and women in their use of ICTs as leisure pursuits in themselves (gaming), however; both men and women used ICTs to supplement their leisure activities.

References

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