



“You don’t want to hurt his feelings.”

Family leisure among grandparents and adult grandchildren.

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Intergenerational Family Leisure

- time that families spend together in free time or recreational activities (Shaw, 1997)
- leisure and family time both have the potential for both +ve and -ve outcomes
- little emphasis on extended family, including grandparents



Intergenerational Ambivalence

(Luscher & Pillemer, 1998)

- conflicting emotions, thoughts, & attitudes
- simultaneous, contradictory experiences that can not be reconciled
- both individual and societal level
- social structure, roles, & norms





Purpose

- to develop an in-depth understanding of the experience of older adults and their adult grandchildren



Methods

- snowball sampling and undergraduate classes at the University of Guelph
- individual, semi-structured interviews with grandparents and adult grandchildren
- social constructionist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006)

Research Questions

- Do grandparents participate in family leisure with their adult grandchildren? If so, how?
- What is the meaning of family leisure for grandparents and their adult grandchildren?
- How is family leisure experienced by grandparents and their adult grandchildren?
- Is the experience of family leisure related to the intergenerational relationship? If so, how?

Participants

- 14 dyads of grandparents and adult grandchildren
- 8 grandmothers, 8 grandfathers
- 11 granddaughters, 3 grandsons
- mainly Southwestern Ontario
- white, middle class, well-educated

Findings





Ambivalence - Grandchildren

Umm, yes a lot. The whole stopping in every day is kind of challenging some times or umm sometimes he tries to do things that he thinks you want him to do or he thinks you would appreciate. You don't want to hurt his feelings so you just kind of ...(Maggie, granddaughter)



Ambivalence - Grandparents

She started screaming. And I went in and she'd been on the bed, on my bed, jumping up and down, landed on her wrist, and with her bones the way they are, she broke her wrist. So I thought, oh, you know, I'm too old for this...I don't know what to do. So I don't have a car, so I just phoned a taxi - I'm right near the General - took her to the General and I phoned my daughter and she came and helped me out, but there's times when I shouldn't...and another time she was in the hall and I have a little table like this, much the same wood with a corner like that. She was flipping, flipping, and she hit her head right on that...and I still think of the pain that girl suffered. I could have done without her then.

(Martha, grandmother)



Intergenerational Stake

- parents perceive their rel'p with their children more positively than the children do (Bengtson & Kuypers, 1971)
- holds true for grandparents as well (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Silverstein, & Wang, 2000)





Intergenerational Stake - Grandchildren

Yeah, definitely, because I don't...for whatever reason, I don't feel that obligation to spend time with him or call him....But I don't feel like I'm doing anything for him and I know, like, it's horrible to say, but I've always been closer with my other grandparents, so for something to happen to them would be a lot harder for me than if something was to happen to grandpa, because we're not that close and, in my opinion, he doesn't even want to be, so I don't feel bad about not wanting to either.

(Lisa, granddaughter)



Intergenerational Stake - Grandparents

But in terms of how important it is... if I didn't see them for a year, umm they wouldn't lose a whole lot of sleep over it. That's kind of reality. (Bernie, grandfather)





Generativity

- psychological construct reflecting midlife concern for, and care of, future generations (Erikson, 1963)
- originally a stage of personal and social development
- now a component of the self constructed as a part of ongoing personality commitments (McAdams, 2001)





Generativity - Grandparents

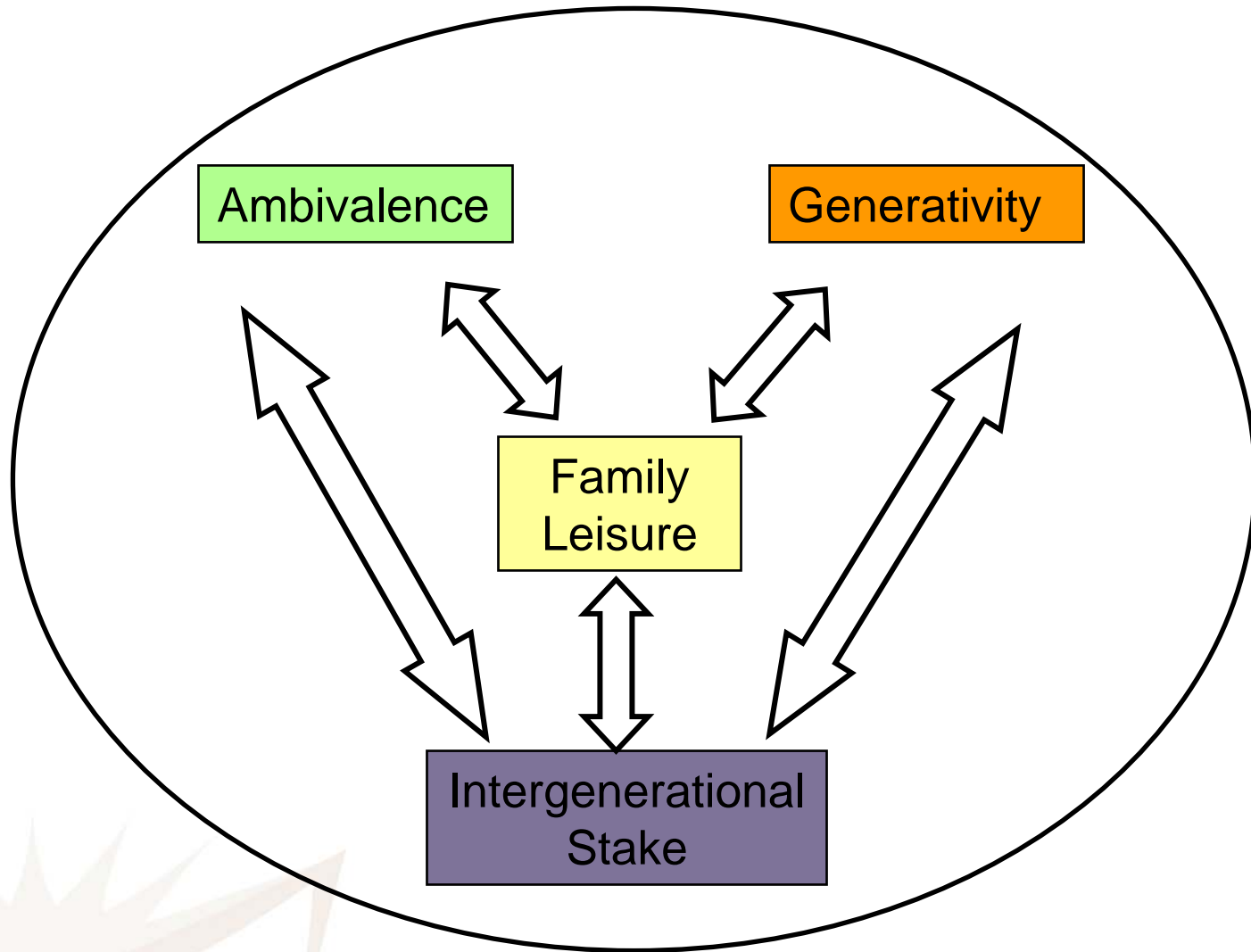
Parents and grandparents can be the occasion for precipitating family gatherings, birthdays or anniversaries or just organize a family party and so on. And umm, so I think that helps give kids the sense of what families is all about. And maybe when they get to be adults, they will try to do the same thing with their kids and encourage that kind of family togetherness. So grandparents can be helpful in achieving that end. (Bernie, grandfather)



Generativity - Grandchildren

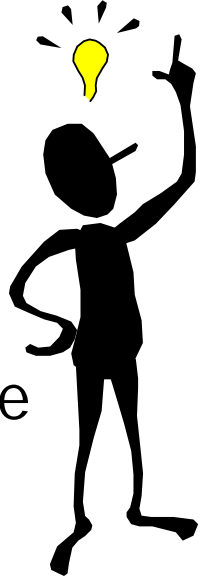
I know I can recognize the fact that you come over and like he [grandfather] won't have gotten dressed yet because it's like there is no need to you know and stay in his grub easily. And so like you come in and he has to like run around and get all dressed and he like combs his hair and all of a sudden like it's like rather than sitting there half put together, he's fully put together. And like when you are first talking to him, he's still groggy because he hasn't really had any interaction so his mind is kind of... You know he's not really thinking. He's reading books and stuff so when you talk to him by the time you're leaving, he's on the ball telling you stuff that's like really interesting. I think part of it could be is that I like to see the fact that you can have an effect on somebody's life. I find like your own, my parents, you come in and talk to them it's like they talk to you the next day so its fine. But with your grandparents, it seems to have a ... you can see it has a health effect --- almost and umm, and so I enjoy that. And I enjoy allowing him to have the liberty to share what he has instead of having to hold it in until the day he dies you know and not having anyone to tell it to. (Aaron, grandson)

Intergenerational Family Leisure





Conclusions



- both +ve and -ve experiences of families and leisure
- link between leisure and family relationships
- family leisure is a useful lens for understanding intergenerational relations
- ambivalence a useful model for understanding intergenerational family leisure
 - builds on Shaw's (1997) call for a contradictory theory of family leisure
- connections between ambivalence, stake, & generativity



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