Freedom to explore the self: How emerging adults use leisure to develop identity

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Abstract

During a period of newly attained freedom preceding commitments expected in adulthood, emerging adults are faced with the major task of identity development. Leisure provides a context with relative freedom wherein emerging adults explore new experiences and access opportunities not always available in more constrained environments like work and school. In this case study of 40 emerging adults from 18 countries (M_{age}=23.14 years), qualitative interviews were used to investigate the role of leisure as a context for identity development. Results indicate five major themes for leisure-based identity development in emerging adulthood: discovering identity, forming identity, defining identity, positioning identity, and forgoing opportunities. These themes support leisure as an additional context wherein emerging adults may flourish on the pathway toward adulthood. Access to both novel and familiar leisure provide a context for emerging adults to actively direct their identity development through decisions made in leisure time.

Leisure provides a context wherein emerging adults (i.e., age 18 through the late 20s) can direct their experiences without the obligations associated with contexts like work, school, or family. Because development is shaped by bi-directional influences between individuals and context (Gottlieb, 1996), leisure, a context framed by freedom, provides a unique environment wherein individuals actively reshape their surroundings by reacting to experiences in leisure and exerting control over this context. These reactions can be seen as recurring transactions between individual and context that contribute to individual commitments in identity (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001). Even with the ability to influence

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context and guide development, not all leisure choices have equal impact on identity development. In fact, leisure has the potential to foster identity exploration and achievement but likewise has the potential to distract individuals from active identity exploration, thereby delaying or interfering with the identity process. Hence, the myriad of experiences comprising the leisure context creates potential for a division between pathways of flourishing and floundering as emerging adults individually direct their leisure time. Previous developmental research has revealed patterns of flourishing or floundering on the pathway toward adulthood (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013), however, researchers have not yet addressed the impact of leisure as a context for facilitating or hindering identity development during emerging adulthood.

By extending research beyond domains of school, work, and family, leisure serves as an additional environment for understanding what behaviors and experiences impact optimal development during the third decade of life. Research on emerging adults' leisure is often narrowly focused on specific forms of leisure (e.g., video games, television viewing, travel) rather than the context as a cohesive space for development. The subjective approach to leisure allows researchers to examine diverse, seemingly unrelated experiences (e.g., travel, video games, horseback riding) and use participant perspective to conceptualize leisure as a cohesive context wherein disparate experiences are harmoniously characterized by voluntary participation and enjoyment. Positive psychology encourages the examination of all circumstances and processes that contribute to flourishing (Gable & Haidt, 2005), and extending the study of identity development to a leisure context might contribute to our understanding of how emerging adults establish their identity. Experiences in leisure may reveal behaviors that enhance or restrict identity development in a manner not observed in other contexts. This study sought to expand the understanding of emerging adult identity development by exploring identity related experiences across a cohesive leisure context. Specifically, the authors aimed to identify processes of identity development in which leisure played a major role and how these processes contributed to both flourishing and floundering pathways on the way to adulthood.

Background

Existing literature on emerging adulthood supports extending research to explore the role of leisure in emerging adult development. The following literature review first summarizes major developmental tasks of emerging adulthood in connection to divergent flourishing and floundering pathways. Next, a more focused review of identity development in emerging adulthood highlights patterns of exploration and commitment across various contexts. Finally, the need for studying leisure as a cohesive context for development is demonstrated through existing research and gaps in the literature.

Emerging adulthood

It is believed that there are distinct features of emerging adulthood setting it apart as a period of development that is unique from both adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2000). These features include *feeling in-between* (emerging adults do not see themselves as either adolescents or adults), *identity exploration* (especially in the areas of work, love, and world

views), *focus on the self* (not self-centered, but simply lacking obligations to others), *instability* (evidenced by changes of direction in residential status, relationships, work, and education), and *age of possibilities (*optimism in the potential to steer their lives in any number of desired directions).

Of interest for this study is the notion that emerging adulthood is a period characterized by high levels of exploration in romantic relationships, work, education, and world views (Arnett, 2000). Patterns of increased exploration are expressed particularly in industrialized nations as young people spend more time seeking opportunities to explore their identities, discover themselves, and oscillate between jobs, relationships, and residencies before settling into an occupation, marriage, or parenthood (Arnett, 2000; Douglass, 2007). The delay of these traditional markers of adulthood has been accompanied by increased time spent in socialization and travel (Douglass, 2007). Developmental contexts during the third decade of life have shifted, allowing individuals to spend an extended period of time focusing on the self and establishing independence. With delayed commitments to workforce, residence, and family (Arnett, 2004), emerging adults have increased freedom permitting self-directed time for exploration in many contexts including leisure.

Researchers have explored both positive and negative factors associated with these features of emerging adulthood. Identity exploration and self-focus allow young people to spend more time selecting paths and activities they prefer (Luyckx, De Witte, & Goossens, 2011; Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010). By recognizing possibilities, individuals maintain a sense of optimism toward the future (Murphy et al., 2010), and studies show an increase in well-being and self-esteem during this period (Arnett, 2007). When comparing flourishing emerging adults with their floundering peers, the most well-adjusted emerging adults appear to be characterized by internalization of one's values, a more settled identity, and less substance use (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). During emerging adulthood, individuals who internalize prosocial values are more likely to report prosocial tendencies and reduced emphasis on themselves (Barry, Padilla-Walker, Madsen, & Nelson, 2008). In sum, flourishing during the third decade of life appears to be connected to making progress in identity including internalizing one's own set of beliefs and values and turning outward as indicated in engaging in prosocial behaviors towards others.

Other scholars (e.g., Hendry & Kloep, 2007) point to negative outcomes associated with emerging adulthood for individuals (e.g., failure to acquire skills), families (e.g., financial burden to parents), and society (e.g., economic cost to societies through delayed workforce entry). Instability in emerging adulthood has been linked to occupation-related negative psychological effects (e.g., job exhaustion and burnout; Luyckx, De Witte et al., 2011). Increased perceived stress, risky behavior, suicide rates, and mental health issues are among the many other challenges faced by emerging adults (Johnson, Gans, Kerr, & LaValle, 2010). Indeed, compared to their peers who are flourishing, it has been found that floundering emerging adults engage in more risk behaviors, experience more internalizing problems, report lower levels of identity achievement, participate in fewer prosocial behaviors, and struggle in their relationships with their parents (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013).

Taken together, the split between negative and positive outcomes demonstrates diverging pathways indicative of flourishing and floundering during the third decade of life. It is becoming increasingly clear that one of the factors that distinguishes those emerging adults who are flourishing from those who may be floundering is the extent to which progress in identity development takes place. It has long been believed that the development of identity is a key developmental process for the late teens and early twenties (e.g., Erikson, 1968).

Identity

One of the most critical tasks for emerging adults is identity development (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). Beginning in adolescence and extending into adulthood, individuals are faced with the task of establishing continuity and sameness in the self across contexts (Erikson, 1968). Marcia's (1993) Neo-Eriksonian model of identity processes offered commitment and exploration as dimensions for operationalizing identity development and sorted the status of one's identity into four states based on these dimensions. High levels of exploration accompanied by high commitment indicate identity achievement whereas identity diffusion and moratorium reflect varying levels of exploration with failure to commit ((Marcia, 1993; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973). Building on this work, contemporary models of identity expand the dimensions of exploration and commitment to more comprehensively explain the identity development process (Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossens, Beyers, & Missotten, 2011). In a process-oriented model of identity development, it is believed that commitment formation typically occurs first, beginning with exploration in breadth paired with commitment making. Commitment evaluation follows with exploration in depth and identification with the commitment. The commitment evaluation process may conclude with a firm identity commitment or may lead to further exploration and a return to the commitment formation process (Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2006).

Taken together, exploration is a key feature in the process of forming an identity. Some young people may face barriers (e.g., cost of living, unemployment, need for education) preventing them from exploring and/or achieving identity, gaining independence, and transitioning to adulthood, however, the period of identity exploration is often shaped by how effectively they use this time to gain experience (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Emerging adulthood provides a period full of potential identity choices and vast variation in pathways to adulthood; as a result, young people may purposefully and consciously make navigating identity formation an active project (Schwartz et al., 2005). Although past research has focused on the domains of work, education, and relationships as contexts within which this exploration occurs, little work has explored the context of leisure as a setting in which identity exploration may occur. Exploration of leisure as a context for development would help to extend the understanding of emerging adult identity development across multiple domains.

Leisure

Leisure is marked by freedom of choice (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997) or, more specifically, "the context of free time in combination with the expectation of preferred experience" (Kleiber, 1999, p. 11). Leisure researchers examine leisure from either a structural or subjective approach (Kuykendall, Tay, & Ng, 2015). The structural approach uses definitions

imposed by theory and researchers to set parameters of what qualifies as leisure participation (Kleiber, Mannell, & Walker, 2011). The subjective approach permits participants to set the delimitations of their leisure context by using their individual perspective to define what is included in leisure. Leisure researchers are often challenged by the diversity of leisure forms (e.g., physical activity, entertainment, artistic expression, technology-based leisure, hobbies, relaxation) and manner of engagement (e.g., duration, frequency, with whom). This problem can be managed with data reduction through a priori categories in quantitative methods, however, this approach leads to minimization of experiential diversity in the leisure context. The subjective approach to leisure participation allows researchers to cast a wide net when studying the leisure context. Using this strategy researchers are able to link together diverse leisure types within a cohesive leisure context. Previous research on different leisure types in emerging adulthood can be connected by considering leisure as a broad context wherein participants define leisure through their own voluntarily chosen experiences accompanied by expectation of enjoyment.

Research of leisure in emerging adulthood has provided some evidence demonstrating how diverse types of leisure are linked to developmental outcomes. A study of emerging adults who graduated from university and entered the work force found individuals were using their free time to explore intrinsically motivating interests in hopes of finding an occupation more connected to their preferences (Murphy et al., 2010). This use of leisure time allowed individuals to explore career options and possibilities through recreational pursuits. For unemployed emerging adults, spending time in leisure positively impacted their subjective well-being and career adaptability (Celen-Demirtas, Konstam, & Tomek, 2015). A study of Birthright trips among Jewish emerging adults documented a link between travel and cognitive identity processing in this specific population (Aaron, 2015). Arnett and Tanner (2011a) called attention to the gap year, a one- to three-year exploratory break between school and work or before beginning university. The gap year is especially common in Northern Europe, where many emerging adults use the time to "pursue leisure, travel, and adventure while working at low-level jobs" (Arnett & Tanner, 2011a, p. 129). Furthermore, evidence of differential flourishing and floundering pathways in emerging adulthood utilized some leisure activities (e.g., drinking, violent video game use) to differentiate between flourishing and floundering groups (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Finally, recent scholarly literature on emerging adult leisure addressed media (Coyne, Padilla-Walker, & Howard, 2015) and television use (Ward, Seabrook, Giaccardi, & Zuo, 2015). Taken together, the small but growing literature suggests that the type of leisure one chooses to engage in may be important in determining whether individuals start to flourish or flounder. Studying leisure as a cohesive context where a diversity of experiences is considered within a single context will allow researchers to explore how leisure broadly impacts emerging adult development.

A noteworthy trend of identity exploration is manifested in risky behavior (Arnett, 2000), including several forms of taboo leisure, deviant recreational behavior typically restricted by social tradition (Russell, 2005). Illegal drug use, risky sexual behavior, and binge drinking peak during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults may use risky and traditionally unacceptable leisure like excessive partying to explore their identity and seek new experiences. Such taboo leisure activities have been observed in young people, but more

research is needed to understand the influence of these risky behaviors on individual identity development in emerging adulthood. Ravert (2009) explored risk taking and now-or-never experiences among emerging adults in college. In this study, participants described experiences they perceived to be available only during their current life stage. Six of the eight themes that emerged were related to leisure including travel and adventure, social events and partying, alcohol and drug use, establishing a large number of relationships, carefree lifestyle, and sports (Ravert, 2009). Emerging adults often take advantage of leisure experiences in anticipation of an opportunity passing (Arnett, 2000); however, it is unclear whether this impacts development, generally, and identity development specifically.

Leisure is often used as a tool for identity formation and exploration in adolescence (Duerden, Widmer, Taniguchi, & McCoy, 2009; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997), and completing identity formation has been described as a critical step to full adulthood (Meulemann, 2003). Because identity formation extends into emerging adulthood, the influence of leisure on identity achievement may have expanded into emerging adulthood. Although data exist illustrating leisure as an individually desired aspect of emerging adulthood (Ravert, 2009), evidence linking emerging adult identity development to leisure is limited. Studying more variables and domains may allow researchers to understand what conditions facilitate or restrict progressive identity formation (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010). In addition, the individual process of identity development does not occur in isolation from interpersonal influence. According to identity control theory, conflict between self-perception and input from others is minimized through a series of feedback loops (Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997). Making identity commitments is a critical first step, however, evaluative feedback from others, especially those with close personal relationships (Kerpelman et al., 1997), influence the identity development process. When the internal perception and external feedback are incongruent the individual will change either their self-perception or the situation (Luyckx, Schwartz, et al., 2011). With leisure including social activities and interpersonal interactions, it is likely that close relationships serve as an important resource for feedback on identity commitments.

The possible impact of leisure on optimal development of identity in emerging adulthood must be further examined. It is expected that findings will reveal a multi-faceted and complex picture of how identity development occurs within the context of leisure. The purpose of this study is to identify how emerging adults in this case study engage in identity development in a leisure context by identifying identity development processes in which leisure plays a critical role. This approach will enhance interpretation of how flourishing and floundering pathways to adulthood may be guided by distinct, leisure-related processes.

Methods

In the current study, participants' personal accounts collected via interviews allowed researchers to focus on lived experiences in the leisure context rather than using surveys administered to large sample or population data, which may obscure processes occurring at the individual level. Qualitative research encouraged participants to discuss their own development and experiences while personally defining the boundaries of leisure without theoretically prescribed limitations.

Participants

The purposive sample (N= 40) was recruited to include diversity in gender, age, nationality, and education (see Table 1). The sample was evenly split by gender and had an average age of 23.14 years old (SD = 3.16). The following external markers of emerging adulthood were used as inclusion criteria during recruitment (Arnett, 2004): (a) participants had never been married, (b) never had children, (c) and were between the ages of 18 and 30 years old. Participants identified a home country within one of four culturally grouped regions of Europe (i.e., Anglo-Saxon, French-German speaking, Nordic, and Mediterranean; as grouped by Esping-Andersen, as cited in Douglass, 2007) with 18 countries represented in the sample. The sample did not include individuals from a fifth region, Eastern Europe, because of historical and demographic differences. The majority of respondents were ethnically European with one respondent identifying her heritage as African and another respondent identifying as mixed race of European and South American heritage.

Data collection

Participants were recruited through direct in-person contact, through gatekeepers within participants' communities (i.e., researchers' personal contacts who were not eligible for the study), through web-based social media, and snowball sampling. Participant recruitment took place during participants' free time and travel, work, and online. Universities were avoided as a recruitment setting as an effort to avoid a study saturated by university students, a debated criticism of emerging adult research (Arnett & Tanner, 2011b). In 2012, at the time of data collection, 36.0% of the European Union population aged 30 to 34 years old had completed university or university-like education (Eurostat, 2016). This study sample closely resembled population-wide data, with 37.5% of participants having completed university at the time of data collection. An additional 32.5% of the sample had either elected an alternative career path to one involving attending university (e.g., trade school, civil service, workforce entry) or had not firmly committed to attend university. The remaining participants were either currently enrolled in university or had completed some university previously. Interview settings included participants' homes, public spaces (e.g., park, train station), and at places of work (e.g., cafe, hospital).

At the time of research design, reports indicated English proficiency in the majority of countries in the Mediterranean region was low in contrast to native speakers in the Anglo-Saxon region, very high proficiency in the Nordic region, and moderate to high proficiency in the French-German region (Education First, 2011). Therefore, the research team was organized to include researchers with advanced Spanish, Italian, and English training. Researchers had previously used language skills in professional settings including language immersion in a foreign country. Interviews with individuals in the Mediterranean region were conducted in participants' native languages whenever possible with interviews in English as the alternative. Non-native English speakers in all regions were offered a text copy of the interview schedule to provide a second source of interview comprehension. All research for this study was completed with the ethical approval of the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects at the authors' institution.

Instrumentation—Interviews were conducted over a 3-month period in 2012. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed and revised through pilot testing and external review prior to field data collection. All participants were asked the same set of primary questions with a bank of follow-up questions used by interviewers to probe for additional information and increase the depth of responses. To address differences in English proficiency, interview schedules were translated into Italian and Spanish and then reviewed by native speakers and language experts (i.e., professors of Italian and Spanish) before additional pilot testing with native speakers from Spain and Italy.

The interview schedule was triangulated to elicit diverse responses through five distinct types of questions: situation narratives (i.e., accounts of personal experiences), repisodes (i.e., "regularly occurring situations"), examples (i.e., abstractions derived from concrete situations), subjective definitions (i.e., personal perception or explanation of terms), and argumentative-theoretical statements (i.e., "explanations of concepts and their relations"; Flick, 2007, p. 62). This format facilitated concrete, semi-abstract, and abstract responses contributing to rich descriptions and diverse examples of participant experiences and perspectives. The flexible interview format allowed participants to discuss leisure and identity at any point in the interview not only in response to questions designed to target identity (e.g., 'What types of free time activities do you feel you are most committed to?'; 'How do you think free time activities influence your identity?').

To ensure credibility, informal member checks were completed following many of the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers summarized the participant's responses, described emerging themes from the study as a whole, and then invited participants to respond critically to the evolving field analysis. Additional formal member checks were completed 10 months after fieldwork when participants were invited to review major themes for accuracy in representing their experiences. The response rate for the follow-up member checks was 50.0%. No major revisions to findings were necessary as a result of the member checks.

Analysis

Following fieldwork, all interviews were transcribed. Interviews completed in Spanish or Italian were transcribed before translation into English. Codes for identity exploration and leisure were created using the approach to codebook development modeled by Ryan (1995). The leisure code was developed to be broadly inclusive of any experiences participants defined as leisure. The exploring identity code included accounts of exploration and commitment as outlined by process-oriented models of identity development (Luyckx, Schwartz et al., 2011) as well as more general reflections or discussion of self. Code reliability was improved through a series of inter-rater reliability tests between the primary investigator and a secondary coder. The codebook was revised and retested until all codes reached high levels ($\hat{k} > 0.7$) of inter-rater agreement as indicated by Cohen's kappa (Landis & Koch, 1977). The following inter-rater agreement levels were considered to be excellent: *exploring identity* ($\hat{k} = 0.82$) and *leisure* ($\hat{k} = 0.73$). After applying the codes to all transcripts using NVivo qualitative analysis software, a cross-coding query was run to

identify all passages coded for both leisure and identity exploration. Only data identified within the leisure-by-exploring identity query were included in this study.

An iterative process of coding started with broad, open coding of all passages for any identifiable themes in leisure and identity (e.g., 'leisure with friends', 'visiting new places', or 'identifying as an athlete'). Any time a new theme was identified, researchers returned to previously coded passages to look for the newly identified theme. Selective coding was then used to reduce the number of codes and focus the analysis on core themes (e.g., 'new experiences, 'making new friends', or 'choosing not to do a leisure activity'). Through axial coding, core themes identified in the previous steps were linked together to describe thematic processes of identity development in leisure.

Results

In response to open ended questions, some participants failed to make connections or occasionally rejected links between leisure and other emerging adult topics such as instability, feeling in-between, and possibilities, however, all participants were able to make connections between individual identity development and leisure in emerging adulthood. Participants identified many types of leisure in connection to identity development with the most commonly discussed leisure forms including going out with friends, travel, sport, reading, and volunteering. Cake decorating, pole dancing, kick boxing, making jewelry, roller skating, shopping, snorkeling, storytelling, playing video games, and going to the zoo were each only mentioned by a single participant, illustrating the diversity and complexity of the leisure context.

A Welsh woman summarized a belief shared by many members of the sample when she said, 'I think if it wasn't for my free time and leisure then I probably wouldn't be the person I am.' Using their own experiences and abstractions of leisure and identity, other members of the sample also expressed the value of leisure as a resource for directing identity development. After reviewing each instance of leisure-by-exploring identity researchers used a reductive process using broad, then selective, and finally axial coding to identify an exhaustive list of themes, then isolate a core set of themes, and finally, identify links between themes and the process of identity development. Exploring identity in leisure was divided into a final set of five thematic groups: (a) discovering identity, (b) forming identity, (c) defining identity, (d) positioning identity, and (e) forgoing opportunities (see Table 2 for a summary of results).

Discovering identity

According to 90.0% (n=36) of the sample, an important identity development process in leisure is becoming cognizant of and reflecting on existing aspects of one's identity. This process of internal exploration is marked by turning inward to realize and review commitments which then leads to further active exploration or conclusions about identity. Within the leisure context, *discovering identity* includes becoming aware of preferences, discovering strengths and weaknesses, and reflecting on self, or as five participants independently described it, 'know[ing] yourself.' At times, this process reveals cognitive

dissonance between an individual's desired and perceived identity motivating changes in her behavior and commitments.

Through various leisure experiences, the European emerging adults in this sample were able to experiment with and learn about their preferences. A Finnish young man said,

> When you really don't have anyone else to tell you that you should do something, then you just have to figure out yourself what you like. So, in that sense, I think it's good to have some time off where you can really think [for] yourself what it is that you really like to do, who you are. What you don't like, what do you like…So having time to think of that I think is really important.

Free time creates a space with increased freedom wherein preferences can be reviewed and discovered. In addition to recognizing and developing personal preferences, leisure allows individuals to discover their strengths and weaknesses. A Luxembourgian participant said, '[Sports] allowed me to discover myself…It allowed me to know where my limits are or where I can go further. What I can and can't do. What I could do.'

Discovering identity also included reflecting on experiences and choices, as exemplified by this individual, '[Free time] has allowed you to be yourself. It has allowed you to move forward as a person. It's allowed you to ask yourself questions, rather than being in a situation where you're too busy to do that.' Free time permits individuals to look inwardly at themselves and reflect and question their choices, opinions, and preferences, and then to move forward with more decisions. Leisure was also used intentionally as a tool for individual development. A Belgian man explained his motivation for taking a gap year to cycle internationally,

> I had to choose what I wanted to study after secondary school and I had no idea. So, for me it sounded very reasonable, kind of smart, to take a gap year to develop myself, find my interests, and just find out what I wanted to study.

Like this example, other participants were able to identify times when they chose leisure experiences with the aim of learning about themselves or reflecting on their behavior. These examples included both individual and group leisure.

In some cases, experiences in leisure led to difficult-to-reconcile cognitive dissonance between how an individual perceived herself and her behavior. These examples were most often illustrated through long discussions of leisure experience marked by personal enjoyment and acknowledgement of negative outcomes. For two Irish women, drinking alcohol was a favored leisure activity shared with many close friends; however, they also felt embarrassment and a desire to change both their behavior and mentality. The following excerpt illustrated the conflicted reasoning of one of the women when explaining her relationship with social drinking,

> We have this stereotypical view onto us that we're big drinkers, and it's true. It's because we are big drinkers. I'd like not to follow that path all my life. It's okay to do it when you're young and you're care free or whatever, but I'd like to reduce it. I'm not saying stop fully, but reduce…[Drinking alcohol all the time is] not a great

thing to do and we've learned that through leisure and free time by doing it. We know that we'd like to reduce that. Kind of change our mentality on it in the future.

In another example, an Austrian man directly linked the negative social perceptions of gambling to his own identity when he said, 'When I'm with these friends…they are gambling, then I think there is also a point of my identity that sometimes I am also bad. It's not good and then I think that my identity is also not very good.' In the process of discovering identity, this young man and a few others found parts of their identity that conflicted with their self-perception, however, despite this conflict, they continued the leisure behavior.

Forming identity

Through exposure to novel, external input such as new experiences, ideas, or people during leisure time, members of the sample had opportunities to make commitments or changes to their identity through a process called *forming identity*. This process was identified in 90.0% (*n*=36) of the sample. A Greek woman summarized this theme by describing the influence of meeting new people or going new places,

> I think it's very important to meet new people, to learn new stuff, see how they think, what they think about and then you can adapt yourself. Some things you can keep, some things are useful for you, so you can keep [them] and follow whatever you want, but also giving knowledge to others and accepting knowledge as well. That can happen both from meeting people or going new places.

The excerpt starts with focus on exposure to 'new people,' 'new stuff,' and new ways of thinking, an important aspect of identity exploration. According to the participant, when she encounters something new, she decides whether to integrate (e.g., 'adapt') these ideas and experiences into her identity by committing (e.g., 'keeping') to some, if not all, of the new ideas to which she is exposed. She also recognized the potential reciprocal nature of this experience created by 'giving knowledge to others;' thus, she offers others the same opportunity to shape their identity through exposure to her ideas and interests.

This idea of change and adaptation was not limited to face-to-face interactions with others. A Swiss woman who recently spent a year traveling alone gave a personal example of how experiences in her leisure time impacted her, 'What really changed me was my travel in South America. Because I came back not as a completely different person, but it really changed me a lot, just my way of thinking and seeing things.' Her identity had already been developed at some level, however, her travel and exposure to new experiences allowed her to continue individual development of her identity via incremental change.

Forming identity includes specific changes to the self resulting from leisure experiences. For an English woman, leisure choices directly contributed to developing character and sense of self:

> I think that however you use your free time, that's more part of your character building. Whatever you choose to do with it is part of what's going to make you who you are. So, you know, you can use it well or not well, but you know, that's going to be what makes you as a person.

She recognized each leisure choice as a part of a 'character building' process, as if each leisure experience is a building block contributing to the process of forming identity. She also placed value on the freedom to choose associated with leisure, noting that consequences of those choices shape individual development. Participants also offered specific leisure exemplars illustrating their own process of individual development via leisure. An Irish woman gave this example, 'Surfing has made me more outgoing and fun and adventurous and made me more willing to try something new even though I haven't done it before. I suppose it's made me more of an adventurous person.'

Conversely, a limited number of participants offered examples of an alternative interpretation marked by extended pursuit of new, sometimes extravagant, experiences. An English man described his desire for continued exploration of self through leisure when he said, 'There's so much more you want to do in terms of being yourself.' He, like others, noted that despite having many leisure-based experiences, he could always see something more to explore. Another participant described how he would try new things but after some time, he would consistently be ready to move on to the next new idea. Others indicated a need to travel in order to have new experiences and avoid feeling 'stuck.' A Swedish woman described her motivation for travel, suggesting geographic change precedes new experiences, 'You know, just seeing new things. And see what kind of life other people have. And not be stuck here, but to see the world.' This sentiment was shared by a French woman who expressed that her experiences of meeting new people were made possible by leaving her home country. These participants and others shared stories that implied some participants have aggrandized identity exploration in a leisure context by expecting travel away from their hometown or country to fulfill their exploratory need for novel experiences. Finally, one participant introduced the idea of new experiences becoming addicting. He said,

> Traveling makes [you] who you are. You really get hooked on that kind of stuff, and never really want to let it go, so it definitely makes your identity…And once you've discovered that, you're hooked. It's a big addiction, but a good one I think.

Although in his case it is not documented as a diagnosable addiction, the idea that one can become 'hooked' on leisure demonstrates the multiplicity of outcomes possible in a leisure context during the formation of identity.

Defining identity

The third theme observed in 65.0% (*n*=26) of the sample was *defining identity*. One participant said, 'I think [leisure] defines your identity. Like if you're climbing a lot, you get into climbing society, or if you have a lot of friends doing it. It kind of makes your own identity as well.' Both through personal examples and general abstractions, many members of the sample independently came to the same conclusion that identity can be defined by leisure. A German post-graduate student explained that leisure identity definitions can be used to create comparative distinctions between individuals, 'I think also [leisure] basically defines you as a person. If you do an extreme sport, you might think you can distinguish yourself from ordinary people.'

Another way of understanding leisure identity definition is to examine the identity labels it creates. A Swedish young woman described the process of defining identity in terms of

commitment to a leisure label, 'I think if you're very committed to something, you get to be like a dog person or something. You feel like, "That's really who I am," and you identify yourself with that.' Because of her free time commitment to training dogs, she saw herself as a 'dog person' and recognized how this is connected to who she is and how she identifies.

Within the defining identity process, 11 participants described leisure as an external marker or identity label used to communicate a message about themselves to others. A Dutch man said, 'If you spend every weekend at a rave party then that alters how people view you, as opposed to when you spend every weekend at a museum. So definitely I think it influences mostly how people think of you.' An English student reiterated this idea when she said, 'I think what you do kind of defines you. If you go clubbing all the time…It kind of identifies you as a party girl.' Identity definitions allow individuals to make internal commitments and convey those distinctions to others. In some instances, participants offered examples of disassociating from others by evaluating differences in leisure behavior. An Italian woman said,

> We have the culture of the wine but I think that the difference between us and especially the Anglo-Saxon people is …they drink to get drunk, to get crazy, to throw bottles or things like this. Here if you get a little bit drunk it's just because you are having fun with other people.

She, like many others, compared her own leisure behavior with that of others to draw conclusions about differences in identity by suggesting that drinking behavior is attached to an individual's identity. Comparing leisure of others to one's own offers an opportunity to evaluate differences in behavior and identity. An Italian man described how he would be different if he had made leisure choices similar to some of his peers, 'If my passions had been different, instead of sports if I liked the clubs, to spend my days and time with other youth and not do anything. I would have become less, I would be childlike.' Finally, in a few cases, individuals used comparisons to draw conclusions about the value of their personal leisure experiences. A Swedish man noted that his extensive traveling made others envious, and a Finnish woman observed that it seemed others always had more leisure activities than her.

Positioning identity

Of the sample, 92.5% (n=37) discussed the process of positioning personal identity within relationships nested in a leisure context. The term positioning was chosen to describe the process by which an individual navigates integration of her developing identity into new and existing relationships across her social network, especially in proximal relationships. Positioning identity was marked by three different patterns of individual-peer interaction where individuals both explicitly and implicitly commented on their cognitive proximity to peers and significant others. The first form of positioning builds off defining identity and shows how individuals use congruency between their leisure and the leisure of peers to draw conclusions about compatibility in friendship and relationships. The second form demonstrates leisure as a resource for establishing and strengthening relationships wherein individuals are apt to explore new ideas and experiences. Finally, the third process illustrates

how individual volition and peer feedback create polarizing demands on core identity decisions.

Positioning identity in the leisure context illustrates how labels assumed during the defining identity process can be sued to make assumptions about compatibility and potential for close friendship. Many individuals in the sample gave examples of the two steps in this process: first, observe the leisure behavior of others in comparison to their own, and then, draw conclusions about whether these comparisons indicate high potential for friendship or relationship. A French woman discussed how an initial shared leisure experience based on common interest provided the foundation for new friendships,

> When you go out, you meet people who like the same things. When you go to a football match or a rugby match, you know that the people who are here [are] interested in the same thing as you. You just start to speak with them and then you're like, 'Okay I have a couple friends who like the same thing as me,' which is pretty key to going out for football match or rugby match or whatever. You start going out with them.

This participant established a new social connection by concluding that shared leisure interest indicated similarity between two strangers. Then following this shared experience, a leisure-focused bond was expected to continue a friendship initially focused on leisure. A Swedish man illustrated how leisure can provide an immediate foundation for social connections, 'I go on my bike and I see a guy on a racing bike, and I feel like we are the same—I identify with this. You feel this connection with someone even though you just pass these people.' Unlike the previous example, this man did not need to directly interact with the other cyclist to recognize commonality in identities. By participating in the same leisure, he immediately assumed a leisure-driven identity connection with other cyclists without any other evidence of similarity. Thus, leisure supports decision-making regarding who would integrate well into an individual's social network and provide friendship based on common interests and shared identity commitments.

Within both new and existing relationships, individuals are apt to be exposed to novel ideas and experiences necessary for the process of forming identity. Participants explained how leisure facilitated stronger bonds and provided a relational context for exploration. An English woman explained, 'That's all part of building a relationship with someone, if you've had shared experience and common ground and things like that. That's how you build friendships and relationships and make them strong.' Using building as a metaphor, she identified leisure as a tool for the incremental process of increasing closeness in friendships and relationships. A Scottish man further illustrated this point by describing a free time experience with his girlfriend,

> We went to the zoo and just had a wander around and that sort of thing, and because of that we sort of bonded over the kind of strange experiences that you get when you go and look at animals in glass boxes…it builds up shared experience. It creates a bond between two people. It strengthens a bond that's already there.

Leisure can draw people closer together in an existing relationship by allowing individuals to accumulate shared experiences and strengthen the link between them. In summary, this

pattern of positioning illustrates how leisure can create or reinforce a connection between two people, thus fortifying a relational context for exploration of ideas, experiences, and worldviews.

The leisure context also serves as a space for friends to offer evaluative feedback on individual identity choices. In all instances of evaluative feedback, participants offered examples of close friends or family members whose feedback held increased weight because of their proximal position within the participant's social network. For one participant, integration of rock climbing into his identity was supported by the positive feedback of his sister and her boyfriend. Another participant was heavily involved in political organizations in his free time. He described how building friendship within a leisure activity (e.g., political volunteering) reinforced his political identity as his friends validated and supported his beliefs. Feedback sometimes takes the form of peer pressure with conflict between the participant's aim and the feedback from peers. One woman was challenged by her friends when trying to make an intentional change in her leisure and spend less time drinking. She explained what typically happens when she tries to diverge her behavior and identity from drinking,

> 'I can literally say [if] one of the girls I would socialize with…came up here and said to me, even if I didn't want to go for a drink that night, and [she] said to me, "Let's go on the beer. Awe c'mon, you're no crack." And then I'll be like, "Okay." And I'd be so easily influenced… I want to change the mentality and how influenced I could be.'

She, like a few other participants, noticed that even when wanting to change a leisure activity inconsistent with her developing identity, friends provided resistance when a decision mismatched with their expectations for her.

Forgoing opportunities

The final theme, *forgoing opportunities*, highlights the process of refusing or misusing opportunities to explore identity in a leisure context. Of the sample, 22.5% (*n*=9) of participants described this process with their own experiences or proposed how it could occur with others. The theme was sometimes manifested through deliberate rejection of exploration as individuals recognized potential for novel leisure and chose to forgo the experience. A participant in Northern Ireland described how he reacted to new experiences, '[Leisure] does allow me to do new things, but I don't really try new things. It's there, but I just don't really try new things to be honest…I've found a routine, do the same things.' Another participant from Spain stated that because he already knows what he likes, he does not feel compelled to try new things even when he has the chance.

Other participants selected leisure by default, exposing themselves to opportunities only when bored or relying on others to create the experience. Illustrating how boredom fuels his exploration as a last resort, a participant stated, 'I guess I get bored, I find something I want to do that I've never tried before and think, "Well, I've got nothing else to do, so I think I'll give it a go."' Another participant relied on his friends to guide his leisure time and said, 'They introduced me to those things, so I'm not sure if I really chose it myself or just got used to it. That's why I do them.' Outlining a process of defaulting to his peers' preferences,

this participant allowed his friends to direct what became a part of his regular repertoire of leisure activities. In a similar manner, a Scottish participant said his process for choosing leisure was to 'take it as it comes' rather than making intentional decisions to pursue new experiences.

Finally, forgoing opportunities also included instances when individuals recognized that free time could be misused. A woman from England described how she felt 'super miserable' and 'pathetic' when she 'did nothing with [herself],' and a man from Italy reflected on how his pastimes could be interpreted as a waste of time. Although these statements are subjective judgments of personal experiences, they demonstrate the belief that there are social parameters directing appropriate use of leisure time, and misuse can lead to adverse consequences or negative self-reflection. As one participant summarized, '[Leisure's] very important in terms of character building and all those things, if you spend it wisely.'

Discussion

These results help us better understand the importance of leisure as a context for identity development during emerging adulthood. Specifically, this study demonstrates that leisure provides a context for internal identity discovery, identity formation, identity definition, and navigation of personal identity within an individual's social relationships, as well as showing how young people may pass up or miss opportunities to use leisure as a context for the development of identity. These findings make several important contributions to our understanding of the role of leisure as a context for identity development.

First, findings in this study offer evidence that emerging adults take an active role in the development of their identity. Individual, personal accounts portrayed leisure as a context for goal-directed behavior often oriented toward exploration and development of identity. Individuals identified leisure experiences where they actively steered their identity development by seeking out new experiences. Emerging adult leisure includes active pursuit of new experiences and relationships followed by reactive cognitive processing and potential for new commitments. Individuals in the study acknowledged their leisure decisions regarding intentional exposure to new people, places, and ideas. The identity processes observed in a leisure context made it apparent that individuals are aware of the impact of leisure and filter what experiences will be integrated into their identity through cognitive evaluation. This provides additional support for the findings of Schwartz and colleagues (2005) who suggested emerging adults take an active role in creating their identity. Likewise, some individuals willfully chose to forgo opportunities to explore. This finding elucidates the impact of volitional control suggested by inherent freedom in a leisure context. New experiences were met with contrasting responses as some participants responded to novelty with energetic pursuits and others with rejection. Further research is needed to understand what motivates some emerging adults to rejected new experiences and whether these decisions impacted their identity development.

Second, processes of discovering and forming identity offer a deconstructed view of identity development where individuals use both internal and external processes to carry out identity development. Discovering identity parallels Luyckx and colleagues' (2006) process of

commitment evaluation, where individuals reflect on commitments previously made. Leisure facilitates this process by providing a context wherein individuals can turn the focus inward for self-reflection and evaluation without pressure to honor other obligations. Forming identity occurs in response to exposure to new experiences. This exposure is characterized by instances of exploration and then either commitment to or rejection of the new ideas and experiences at hand. This incremental process follows a developmental trajectory as emerging adults compare previous experiences and commitments to new opportunities encountered through exploration. Examples of this process include the Greek participant who described the adaptions to self following interactions with new people and places and the Englishwoman who saw leisure activities as a resource for building character. In addition, previous process-oriented models of identity development (see Luyckx, Schwartz, et al., 2011) refer to both internal and external aspects of exploration in both breadth and depth. The findings in this study extend this model by suggesting manners in which both internal (i.e., discovering identity) and external (i.e., forming identity) forces contribute to identity development in leisure.

Third, general identity development is expanded by two distinct resources available in leisure. First, leisure-specific activities provide an opportunity for defining and communicating identity commitments, and, second, individual autonomy in leisure contexts offers a dynamic relationship between individual and context. Defining identity serves to conclusively inform identity development with leisure used as a symbol of firm identity commitments. This process extends the idea that specific leisure activities represent unique identity images motivating participation (Haggard & Williams, 1992). Identity definition not only echoes the idea that leisure activities are linked to identity images, but reveals that identity definition can be intentionally used to communicate identity decisions to others. This study also expands the link between leisure and identity definition beyond college students and into the leisure context holistically.

Like many other contexts, evidence in this study suggests the influence between leisure and the individual appears to be bi-directional (Gottlieb, 1996). However, unlike educational and work settings, individuals maintain a great deal of control over the spaces, people, and experiences to which they are exposed in leisure. As emerging adults explore new leisure experiences, they continue or cease participation of their own volition. In the case of one Italian participant who went to the gym daily, he said he could reject this activity entirely and expel it from his daily context if he no longer desired to go. This regulation of the environment suggests the circumstances for development are not static but are shaped by the decisions of the individual. For the Swedish young man involved in political organizations, he recognized that the group he decided to socialize within his free time would provide the context guiding and reinforcing his ideals and identity. He recognized that had he chosen a different political organization, he would have changed in different ways. Because the leisure context can be actively redirected by the individual, conditions contributing to optimal development may change and evolve over time and move toward stability. Earlier in development as emerging adults explore new leisure experiences, the environment may be relatively unstable. Similar trends of instability have been tied to identity development and identified in emerging adulthood with frequent transition in jobs, residence, and relationships (Arnett, 2004). The power of individuals to create their environment and

experiences raises an interesting issue in identifying circumstances that allow individuals to flourish. However, processes of discovering, forming, and defining identity suggest progress toward commitments in leisure and a more stable environment over time.

Fourth, the results of this study further inform the processes by which emerging adults develop their identities through shared experience with others. Positioning identity extends what Arnett (2004) has described as exploration of love and relationships. Leisure facilitates a context wherein individuals can establish and build both friendships and romantic relationships and then together explore additional new experiences. In this sample, shared leisure was a tool for enhancing relationships both in early formation stages and later on in established relationships. This time spent with others in leisure facilitates identity development processes as new relationships expose individuals to novel experiences and ideas. Identifying shared interests and experiences in leisure can lead to patterns of commitment as emerging adults incorporate new preferences and pastimes into their sense of self through identity formation. Peers also provide a source for feedback on identity commitments as they validate or reject leisure-based identity choices of their friends. In particular, when emerging adults identify leisure behavior they want to change or eliminate, peers can be a barrier to identity conflict resolution by refusing the individual's choice and encouraging her to continue the leisure behavior.

Fifth, the processes identified in this study revealed potential for impact on both flourishing and floundering trajectories in emerging adulthood. Emerging adults follow a variety of different pathways toward adulthood. Recognizing how leisure helps emerging adults establish identity may be especially valuable in distinguishing emerging adults who flourish versus those who flounder during this period. As suggested by the accounts of emerging adults in this study, leisure is not only enjoyable but serves to help emerging adults explore and commit to an identity. Certain types of leisure or free time activities may be more beneficial for encouraging flourishing and successful development, but generally, members of this sample see clear benefit in their lives as a result of choices they make in leisure. In some cases, participants provided insight into adverse patterns in leisure where unwavering commitments (i.e., 'addictions') could compel an individual to pursue an activity and comprise the freedom to cease participation. Furthermore, some participants recognized potential for misusing freedom in leisure time. These forgone opportunities highlight a potential pathway for floundering in emerging adulthood. Misuse and rejection of opportunities in leisure could be further investigated to understand how some leisure decisions contribute to suboptimal development.

By documenting processes of identity development in the leisure context rather than through distinct leisure forms, this study supports leisure as a diverse, cohesive domain for development. Identifying thematic processes instead of focusing on specific leisure forms allows for more transferability to other populations where leisure may be different but developmental processes similar. Despite the range of experiences of individuals in this study, leisure provided a cohesive environment wherein processes of identity development were shared across gender, nationality, and educational level. As an additional environment for considering impact on positive development, leisure may be an essential context to consider when holistically examining development of emerging adults.

Future research addressing specific leisure typologies in emerging adulthood could reveal whether certain leisure forms are more salient as resources for optimal development. For example, previous research has identified drinking and playing violent video games as leisure activities linked to emerging adults floundering on their pathway toward emerging adulthood (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Identification of specific leisure types linked to floundering trajectories could be examined within the processes identified in this study to understand how emerging adulthood discover and then integrate these leisure activities into their developing identity. Additionally, comparative studies may reveal differences in patterns of leisure use between cultural groups, ages, gender, and socio-economic status. Activities and processes may vary between and within groups. Findings from this study focus on freedom in leisure without addressing constraints. Future research addressing constraints and navigation of barriers to leisure could provide additional insight into the processes of negotiating freedom in leisure. Much like leisure types, constraints to leisure are likely to vary across groups.

Evidence was found supporting leisure as a resource for individual development, however, comparisons of leisure to other previously studied domains for development in emerging adulthood were not within the scope of this study. Extended analysis of this and future data should compare leisure to other important life domains including romantic relationships, work, and education. It would not be expected that the leisure context on its own provides adequate opportunities for complete exploration and identity development. Because individuals are able to choose and construct their leisure context, some exposure to new experiences may be limited when an individual is unwilling or reluctant to experience something new. Experiences, ideas, and people that seem foreign, uncomfortable, or unattainable could be missed in a leisure context where individuals can choose only what appears attractive or rewarding. Together with contexts characterized by guided structure such as work and school, leisure can enhance identity exploration by extending development into a context marked by autonomous freedom. Whether the impact of leisure experiences in emerging adulthood positively or negatively spills over into other domains remains unknown.

Limitations

Findings from this research should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. Although qualitative research allowed broad, in-depth examination of emerging adults' experiences in leisure, results should be applied to other populations with caution. As a case study, the findings support evidence for these identity development themes only in the study sample. Further research is necessary to investigate these themes in other and more diverse populations (e.g., other countries, people of color, individuals living in poverty) and more extensively among European emerging adults. This study included individuals from early to late emerging adulthood providing evidence for the leisure identity themes throughout the age period, however, cross-sectional data collection limits conclusive evidence supporting developmental impact over time. Additional research documenting emerging adults in leisure at multiple time points may reveal how these themes differentially impact individuals as they age.

Efforts were made to conduct studies in participants' native languages whenever possible. Because the study included participants from more than a dozen countries, some interviews were conducted in the participant's second language (i.e., English). All participants demonstrated comprehension of English language during interviews. The authors acknowledge interviews conducted in English for non-native English speakers may impact the individual's ability to respond to interview questions.

Finally, the results of this study should be viewed as foundational and preliminary rather than conclusive. The open, qualitative approach was selected to elicit themes and variables for future study. Future research may reveal disconfirming evidence or variations in leisure-based identity themes. More research is needed to explore the role of leisure in identity development universally. Much remains unknown about the leisure context and how it contributes to the positive development of emerging adults across the world.

Conclusion

Leisure is a diverse context wherein emerging adults actively navigate their identity development through exposure to new experiences and relationships, as well as resulting commitments. This space, free of obligation, allows self-directed identity development. Arnett's (2000) oft cited description of emerging adulthood as a period for exploring "love, work, and worldviews" (p. 469) could be extended to include leisure as a major exploratory area contributing to the development and growth of individual emerging adults. In order for emerging adults to flourish, all circumstances and contexts should be considered in the lived experience of emerging adults. Scholars studying emerging adults should recognize the impact leisure has on optimal development during the third decade of life and take steps to incorporate elements of leisure into their research.

Acknowledgments

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Table 1

Sample Demographic Frequencies and Percentages

Demographic Marker	Male	Female	Total[a]
Age[b]			
19–21	8 (20.0)	7 (17.5)	15 (37.5)
22–24	5 (12.5)	7 (17.5)	12 (30.0)
25–27	3 (7.5)	4 (10.0)	7 (17.5)
28–30	4 (10.0)	2 (5.0)	6 (15.0)
Region[c]			
Anglo-Saxon	3 (7.5)	9 (22.5)	12 (30.0)
French-German	8 (20.0)	4 (10.0)	12 (30.0)
Nordic	6 (15.0)	2 (5.0)	8 (20.0)
Mediterranean	3 (7.5)	5 (12.5)	8 (20.0)
Education			
No University	8 (20.0)	2 (5.0)	10 (25.0)
Trade School	1 (2.5)	2 (5.0)	3 (7.5)
Some University	4 (10.0)	8 (20.0)	12 (30.0)
University Completed	3 (7.5)	6 (15.0)	9(22.5)
Some Post-grad	2 (5.0)	2 (5.0)	4 (10.0)
Post-grad completed	2 (5.0)		2 (5.0)

Note. Percentage of total sample in parentheses.

[a] *N*=40 (20 male, 20 female) for all demographic markers

[b] Age rounded to nearest whole year.

[c] Regions suggested by Esping-Andersen (as cited in Douglass, 2007, p. 104). Home countries included Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Wales.

table 2

Summary of Leisure Identity Themes

Theme	Description	Typical Example
Discovering Identity	Realizations about oneself resulting from self-reflection in or as a result of leisure experience	'[Sports] allowed me to discover myself…It allowed me to know where my limits are or where I can go further. What I can and can't do.' (Luxembourg, male)
Forming Identity	Changes and commitments to identity resulting from exposure to novel, external leisure experiences	'What really changed me was my travel in South America. Because I came back not as a completely different person, but it really changed me a lot, just my way of thinking and seeing things.' (Switzerland, female)
Defining Identity	Utilization of leisure labels and behavior to either associate with or dissociate from others	'I think [leisure] defines your identity. Like if you're climbing a lot, you get into climbing society, or if you have a lot of friends doing it. It kind of makes your own identity as well.' (Belgium, male)
Positioning Identity	Initiating connections through similar leisure interest, strengthening relational context as a space for exploration, and evaluating feedback regarding identity from close peers	'That's all part of building a relationship with someone. If you've had shared experience and common ground and things like that, that's how you build friendships and relationships and make them strong.' (England, female)
Forgoing opportunities	Making decisions that do not facilitate exploration or proactive use of leisure time	'[Leisure] does allow me to do new things, but I don't really try new things. It's there, but I just don't really try new things to be honest…I've found a routine, do the same things.' (Northern Ireland, male)

Note. $N = 40$. The number of cases for each theme: $n_{discovering}=36$; $n_{forming}=36$; $n_{defining}=26$; $n_{positioning}=37$; $n_{forgoing}= 9$.