

## Leisure and Family Functioning in Adoptive Families: Implications for Therapeutic Recreation

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The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between family leisure involvement and family functioning among intact families with adopted children of color. The sample consisted of 197 families. Data were analyzed at the parent, youth, and family perspective. The Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP) was used to determine family leisure involvement in core and balance leisure activities. FACES II was used to measure family functioning. Blocked multiple regression analyses indicated a positive relationship between family leisure and family functioning. Specifically, in the parent data, both core and balance patterns were significant predictors of family functioning, yet from the youth and family perspective only core leisure involvement was significantly related to family functioning. Implications for TR practitioners and recommendations for further research are discussed.

**KEY WORDS:** *family leisure, core and balance family leisure, family functioning, adoptive families*

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The value and importance of considering the family system is not a novel concept to therapeutic recreation practitioners. It is a common experience, particularly in mental health, to treat and successfully help an individual only to send him or her back to a family system or environment in which he or she quickly regresses to previous dysfunctional behavioral patterns. Such experiences have motivated professionals to acknowledge the need to work with their clients' families in an effort to increase the effectiveness and carry over of their services. Several approaches to family interventions including leisure education programs, transition services, and treatment components have been presented in the therapeutic recreation literature (DeSalvatore, 1989; Malkin, Philips, & Chumbler, 1991; Monroe, 1987; Pommier & Witt, 1995). While researchers have consistently reported a positive relationship between family leisure involvement and aspects of family functioning (Hawkes, 1991; Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1991), the nature of the family leisure relationship has not been clearly understood. The lack of a consistent theoretical explanation of family leisure functioning that can guide therapeutic recreation programming for families has made it difficult for practitioners to justify family interventions and to collect consistent outcome based efficacy data.

In the last five years there has been a resurgence of research examining family leisure (cf. Kelly, 1997; Shaw & Dawson, 2001) that has furthered understanding in several areas and that provides valuable implications for therapeutic recreation. One area has focused on the effects of family leisure for families who have a child with a disability (Mactavish & Schleien, 1998; Mactavish, Schleien, & Tabourne, 1997; Scholl, McAvoy, & Smith, 1999; Scholl, Smith, McAvoy, & Schmitz, 2001). Another area has focused on the impact of challenging outdoor adventure programming for families with youth at risk (Hill, Freeman, & Huff, 2001; Huff, 2002; Wells, 2001). A third area has focused on testing a theoretical model of family leisure function-

ing. The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning, for family systems in general (Zabriskie, 2000, 2001; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). This theoretical model attempts to explain how different patterns of family leisure involvement may affect aspects of family functioning.

Over 120,000 children are adopted annually in the United States (Flango & Flango, 1994) by some 500,000 families seeking to adopt a child (Freundlich, 1998). Brinich and Brinich (1982) cited 13 authors who indicated that there was a significant overrepresentation of adopted children in mental health treatment. Furthermore, there is "strong evidence that the frequency, intensity, and duration of behavioral problems is greater for adopted children with special needs than it is for children involved in conventional adoptions" (Erich & Leung, 1998, p. 138). Yet, over 80% of adoptions involving children with special needs are successful and remain intact. Although researchers have begun to examine the characteristics of successful adoptive families that include children with special needs in an effort to positively "guide policy, practice, and theory" (Rosenthal & Groze, 1990, p. 476), family leisure involvement has not been examined among this population. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the relationship between family leisure involvement and family functioning among intact adoptive families that included children with special needs. The specific subgroup of special-needs adoptive families used in this study was a sample of families with adopted children of color. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between family functioning and overall family leisure involvement and that both core and balance family leisure patterns would contribute to the explanation of that relationship.

### Review of Literature Families and Therapeutic Recreation

Providing family leisure interventions is not a new concept for therapeutic recreation

professionals. Mc there is a "need for professionals to begin programming" (p. components of a f. vided by therapeut at a child/adolesce Salvatore (1989) re apeutic recreation broader family sy: child psychiatric ser mary of specific ap; can utilize when w their families. Malki family leisure educa signed specifically fi (adults and adolec treatment. While th cused programs hav response to a direc developed with little direction. This make consistent quality pro justify these program Although family- likely been instrume treatment of many pa there is little outcome ings reported to sup study (Pommier & W. examine the efficacy program for adolescent a family training progr a difference between groups in perceptions immediately following follow-up three month differences between gr primary intervention fo this study was not i proaches, but consiste workshops while the volved in an outdoor : Here again, the lack of framework makes it diff ily focused programs a effectiveness.

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professionals. Monroe (1987) argued that there is a "need for therapeutic recreation professionals to begin providing family based programming" (p. 44). She then described the components of a family leisure program provided by therapeutic recreation professionals at a child/adolescent psychiatric facility. De-Salvatore (1989) recognized the need for therapeutic recreation providers to include the broader family system when working in a child psychiatric setting, and provided a summary of specific approaches that practitioners can utilize when working with patients and their families. Malkin et al. (1991) presented a family leisure education program that was designed specifically for families with members (adults and adolescents) in substance abuse treatment. While these and other family-focused programs have been implemented in response to a direct need, they have been developed with little empirical and theoretical direction. This makes it difficult to provide consistent quality programs and to continue to justify these programs for families.

Although family-focused programs have likely been instrumental in the successful treatment of many patients and their families, there is little outcome data or evaluative findings reported to support their efficacy. One study (Pommier & Witt, 1995), however, did examine the efficacy of an outward bound program for adolescent offenders that included a family training program. Findings indicated a difference between treatment and control groups in perceptions of family functioning immediately following the program, but at the follow-up three months later no significant differences between groups were found. The primary intervention for family members in this study was not family recreation approaches, but consisted of separate parent workshops while the adolescents were involved in an outdoor adventure experience. Here again, the lack of a guiding theoretical framework makes it difficult to compare family focused programs and to evaluate their effectiveness.

In summary, the development of family-

based programs coupled with the effort to present them in the literature indicates an increased recognition by the profession of the pressing need to provide therapeutic recreation intervention to clients and their families. There is also a continued need for empirical and theoretical understanding of how family leisure involvement might influence aspects of family functioning. Even a simple model can provide the framework necessary to direct programming, effectively measure outcomes, and assist in program justification. Scholars have also recognized the need for a consistent theoretical approach to family leisure research.

### Family Leisure

Examinations of family leisure have consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between family leisure involvement and indicators of successful family functioning (Hawkes, 1991; Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1991). Hawkes (1991) concluded that six decades of family leisure research have found that "family strength or cohesiveness is related to the family's use of leisure time" (p. 424). It has also been suggested that, in modern society, leisure is the single most important force developing cohesive healthy relationships between husbands and wives and between parents and their children (Couchman, 1988, as cited in Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1997).

The positive relationship between family leisure and aspects of family functioning is fairly well established, but the nature of the relationship is still poorly understood. Family leisure research has lacked an adequate theoretical framework to interpret "the idiosyncrasies of the investigation at hand" (Orthner & Mancini, 1991, p. 299). Reviewers consistently agree that "theory has been undervalued and underused by researchers" (Holman & Epperson, 1989, p. 291) in the family leisure area. Holman and Epperson (1989) argued that "research that is descriptive and explanatory without being a clear step to creating testable, theoretical propositions is of negligible value" (p. 291). In response, the Core and Balance

Model of Family Leisure Functioning has been developed and tested (Zabriskie, 2000, 2001; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). The model is grounded in family systems theory and suggests that varying patterns of family leisure involvement contribute to family functioning in different ways.

### Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning

Kelly (1996, 1999) used the notion of continuity and change to explain the meaning of leisure behavior for individuals. He identified two different styles or patterns of leisure activities that individuals pursue across the life course. One style is consistent, relatively accessible, and persists throughout the life course; the other suggests variety, is less accessible, and changes throughout the life course. Iso-Ahola (1984) indicated that this duality in leisure patterns is a result of the interplay and balance between two opposing needs or forces that simultaneously influence individual behavior. He stated that individuals have a tendency to "seek both stability and change, structure and variety, and familiarity and novelty in one's leisure" (p. 98). In other

words, through leisure behavior, individuals meet needs for both stability (security) and change (novelty).

This interplay between stability and change plays an even greater role when examining the needs of a family system. The balance of these needs is one of the underlying concepts of family systems theory that suggests families seek a dynamic state of homeostasis. That is, to function effectively, family systems must meet the need for stability in interactions, structure, and relationships, as well as a need for novelty in experience, input, and challenge (Klein & White, 1996).

The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning combines Kelly's (1999) notion of two different leisure patterns with Iso-Ahola's (1984) concept of the need for both stability and change, and does so in the context of family leisure (see Figure 1). The model indicates that there are two basic categories or patterns of family leisure (core and balance) which families utilize to meet needs of stability and change (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Core family leisure patterns are depicted by activities that are common, everyday, low-cost, relatively accessible, often

home-based, and frequently. This includes watching television, playing board games, the yard, shooting gardening, or play pile has been rake sure patterns often resources and tend to provide a consistent, context in which enhanced and feel created.

Balance family leisure patterns, on the other hand, are experiences that are less than core activities based. Activities include hunting, fishing, boating, special park, sporting events, family leisure investment of resources, planning, or more spontaneous and activities. Balance of-the ordinary" predictability or 1 members to neglect and experiences day life.

The Core and balance core family leisure family's need for regularly provides experiences that fosterings of family cohesion. On the other hand, balance primarily addresses and change by provide the input to be challenged progress as a variety theory (Olson, 1 of these two core family adaptability functioning.

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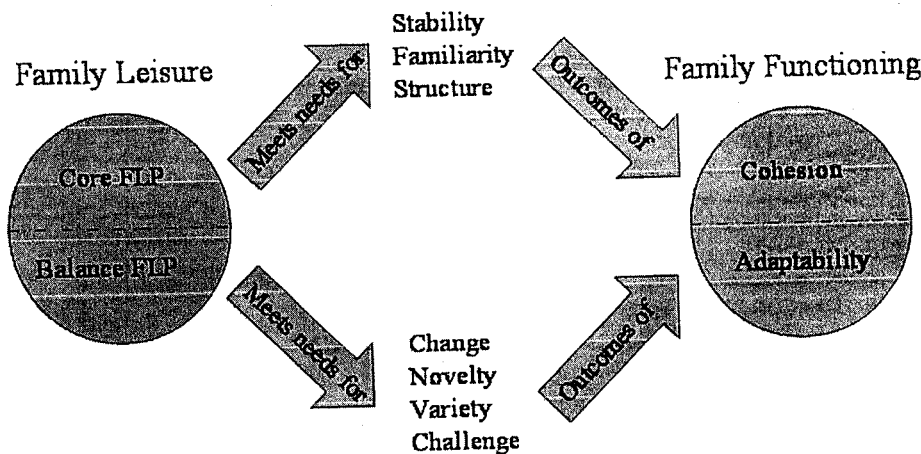


FIGURE 1. CORE AND BALANCE MODEL OF FAMILY LEISURE FUNCTIONING. FLP = FAMILY LEISURE PATTERNS.

home-based, and are participated in frequently. This includes activities such as watching television and videos together, playing board games, doing activities together in the yard, shooting baskets in the drive way, gardening, or playing in the leaves once the pile has been raked together. Core family leisure patterns often require little planning or resources and tend to be informal. They provide a consistent, safe, and usually positive context in which family relationships can be enhanced and feelings of family closeness increased.

Balance family leisure patterns, on the other hand, are portrayed through novel experiences that are less common and less frequent than core activities, and are usually not home based. Activities may include family vacations, most outdoor recreation such as fishing or boating, special events, and trips to a theme park, sporting event, or bowling alley. Balance family leisure patterns often require more investment of resources including time, effort, planning, or money, and are, therefore, less spontaneous and more formalized than core activities. Balance activities tend to be "out-of-the ordinary" and include elements of unpredictability or novelty, which require family members to negotiate and adapt to new input and experiences that stand apart from everyday life.

The Core and Balance Model suggests that core family leisure patterns primarily address a family's need for familiarity and stability by regularly providing predictable family experiences that foster personal relatedness and feelings of family closeness and cohesion. On the other hand, balance family leisure patterns primarily address a family's need for novelty and change by providing new experiences that provide the input necessary for family systems to be challenged, to develop, to adapt, and to progress as a working unit. Family systems theory (Olson, 1986) indicates that the balance of these two constructs, family cohesion and family adaptability, indicates the level of family functioning.

Further, the Core and Balance Model sug-

gests that families who participate in both core and balance family leisure activities are likely to function better than those who participate in extremely high or low amounts of either category. Consider, for example, a family who spends little time together and participates in very few, if any, core family leisure activities. Upon identifying family problems or dysfunction, a parent suggests that they all go on a family trip together in order to bond and improve family relationships. Without the base of cohesive relationships and related family skills that are developed in core leisure interactions, the flexibility required by such a balance activity will likely overwhelm the family system and may lead to arguments, frustration, blaming, and guilt. Without some foundation of core leisure activity patterns, balance leisure activities are not only less effective than core leisure activities, they may actually disrupt the family system. Conversely, a family who participates exclusively in large amounts of core activities with little involvement in balance activities is likely to be ill prepared to effectively adjust or adapt to the out of the ordinary stresses and challenges that abound in today's society. Therefore, both core and balance family leisure patterns tend to interrelate in order to positively influence family functioning.

Studies that have used this theoretical framework have consistently reported positive relationships between family leisure involvement and family functioning among broad normative samples of families (including both parents and children) and college students (Zabriskie, 2000; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Furthermore, core family leisure patterns have been consistent linear predictors of family cohesion and have also been positively related to family adaptability (Zabriskie, McCormick, & Austin, 2001). Balance patterns have been less consistent in their linear prediction of family adaptability and tend to be curvilinear in nature, due to a higher correlation with families who were either at the lower or higher end of the family functioning continuum. Such empirical evidence continues to support the notion that family involvement in

both types of activities is important and suggests that core patterns may play a particularly meaningful role in family leisure functioning.

### Adoptive Families

Although the majority of the estimated one million families with adoptive children in the United States are considered to function well (Stolley, 1993), a large body of research indicates "that adopted children are more likely to experience emotional adjustment difficulties" (Rosenthal & Groze, 1990, p. 477) which coincide with family conflict, stress, and dysfunction. Scholars (Brinich & Brinich, 1982) have consistently reported a significant overrepresentation of adopted children in mental health treatment. Based on examination of 15 studies, McRoy, Grotevant, and Zurcher (1988) concluded that adopted children were two to five times more likely to require psychological treatment than non-adopted children. Furthermore, Erich and Leung (1998) argued that there is "strong evidence that the frequency, intensity, and duration of behavioral problems is greater for adopted children with special needs than it is for children involved in conventional adoptions" (p. 138).

Adoptive children are classified as having special needs if they have any of the following characteristics: (a) older at the time of placement (ranging from one to eight years depending on the state), (b) emotional or behavioral disorders, (c) physical or mental disabilities, (d) are a member of a sibling group, or (e) are of mixed or minority racial background (Groze & Rosenthal, 1991). Children of racial minority make up over 60% of those in out-of-home care and often wait at least twice as long as children of racial majority for adoptive placement (McRoy & Grape, 1999). Research on special-needs adoptive families has typically focused on adoption disruptions, dissolutions, and other problems encountered with the adoption of children with special needs. In an effort to guide practice and increase theoretical understanding, studies are beginning to identify characteristics of successful special-needs adoptive families (Erich & Leung, 1998;

Groze, 1996; Rosenthal, 1993; Rosenthal & Groze, 1990). Researchers have consistently indicated that successful adoptive family systems are more cohesive and adaptable than families with only biological children (Deiner, Wilson, & Unger, 1988; Groze, 1996; Hoopes, Alexander, Silver, Ober, & Kirby, 1997; Rosenthal & Groze, 1990), but have not provided recommendations on how such characteristics can be developed. Although Rosenthal and Groze (1990) found recreation focused around the family to be highly valued among special-needs adoptive families, no previous study has examined the leisure functioning of families with adopted children of color. Scholars (Erich & Leung, 1998) have also called for studies that examine a child's perspective of family functioning in an adoptive family system.

### Methodology

#### Sample

A specific sub-sample of intact families who adopted children with special needs was used for this study. The sample consisted of families who had at least one adopted child of color. Families were recruited through a mailing list from a support-type organization in a western state for families who have adopted at least one African American child. In an effort to approach a family systems perspective it would be ideal to collect data from every family member; yet, the burden of such a request would have most likely limited the number of possible study participants. Therefore, in an effort to limit the toll on subject families and still approach a family systems perspective versus parent only perspective, data were requested from one child aged 11 to 14 and from the parent in the home with the next upcoming birthday. (The restricted age range for the children was used to be able to compare these findings to normative samples; that comparison, however, is beyond the scope of this paper). If more than one child in the home was between 11 and 14, then preference for completing the youth questionnaire was to

be given to an adolescent in the specified age range or the oldest child in the household did not fall in the specified age range then data were requested from the parent.

There were 42 youth questionnaires returned and a questionnaires were returned from every household; 33 were usable, resulting in 33 usable youth members. A post-second mailing of 212 returned questionnaires (response rate), 15 of which were unusable and were unusable for 197 adult respondents.

The low number of youth responses was a factor of how the study was conducted between the ages of 11 and 14 was not the focus of the study. Comparisons between biological children versus biological children in the family leisure systems framework were not the focus since all children in the study were in an adoptive family system.

Responding parents were predominantly female (97.9%). Parents' ages ranged from 30 to 50 years ( $M = 39.4$ ,  $SD = 6.2$ ). 80% of parents were married, 10% had been divorced, and 10% indicated they were in a common-law relationship. The majority (87%) belonged to the western region. Of the youth members, 16 were male (53.6%) and 16 were female (46.4%). The request for youth questionnaires was for those between the ages of 11 and 14; there were five youth members who were 15 years old. The purposes of this study were not matter that their age was over age 14; therefore, the youth sample was limited to those who were biological children

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be given to an adopted child in the appropriate age range or the one with the next birthday. If a household did not have a child in this age range then data were only collected from one parent.

There were 423 members in the organization and a questionnaire packet was mailed to every household; 32 were returned as undeliverable, resulting in a total population of 391 members. A postcard reminder as well as a second mailing of the questionnaire resulted in 212 returned questionnaires (54.2% response rate), 15 of which were completed improperly and were unusable. The final sample included 197 adult respondents (50.4%) and 56 children.

The low number of children responding was a factor of how many homes had a child between the ages of 11 and 14. In addition, it was not the focus of this study to make comparisons between the perspectives of adopted versus biological children. This study examined family leisure involvement from a family systems framework in which it does not matter whether the responding child is adopted or not, since all children are part of the adoptive family system.

Responding parents ( $N = 197$ ) were predominantly female (80.5%) and white (97.9%). Parents' ages ranged from 24 to 63 years ( $M = 39.4$ ,  $SD = 7.53$ ). The majority of parents were married (89.8%), while 11.8% had been divorced at some time, and 11.4% indicated they were living in a single parent family. The majority of the responding parents (87%) belonged to the dominant religion of the region. Of the youth respondents, the majority were male (53.6%) and ranged in age from 11 to 16 ( $M = 12.4$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ). While the request for youth to participate in the study was for those between the ages of 11 and 14, there were five youth who completed a questionnaire who were 15–16 years old. For the purposes of this segment of the study, it did not matter that there were some respondents over age 14; therefore, they were included in the youth sample. Most of the youth (49.1%) were biological children of the responding

parent while 45.5% were adopted, and the remaining 5.4% were step or foster children. As expected with this population there was more ethnic diversity in the children than parents; the majority of the children were white (51.7%) followed by 28.6% black, 8.9% of mixed ethnicity, 7.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3.5% Hispanic. Family size ranged from 2 to 22, with an average family size of 5.3 members ( $SD = 2.38$ ) currently living in the home. Annual family income varied greatly, ranging from less than \$10,000 to over \$150,000. The modal annual income category for families was \$50,000–\$59,999 (21.5%), with 72.8% having an income between \$40,000 and \$99,999.

### Instrumentation

The research questionnaire included the following scales: (a) the 30-item Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales (FACES II) (Olson et al., 1992) which measures perceptions of family cohesion and adaptability and calculates family functioning based on Olson's Circumplex Model (Olson, 1986); (b) the 42-item Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP) which measures family leisure activity patterns based on the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning (Zabriskie, 2000); and (c) relevant socio-demographic data. Three data sets were compiled to create a parent, youth, and family level perspective. Family level variables were created by computing the mean of parent and youth scores.

The FACES II contains 16 cohesion items and 14 adaptability items. The scale was designed to measure family dynamics, therefore, the items focus on system characteristics of all the family members currently living in the home. The instrument asks the respondent to indicate how frequently, on a scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always), the described behavior occurs in her or his family. Cohesion and adaptability scores were calculated based on a formula that adds and subtracts item scores for each dimension based on its positive or negative reference. This calculation provides a total perceived family cohe-

sion score and an adaptability score. After obtaining total cohesion and total adaptability scores, corresponding 1–8 values were assigned based on the linear scoring interpretation of Olson et al. (1992). These two scores were then averaged in order to obtain the family type score which is used as an indicator of overall family functioning. To gain a better understanding of the family system, family perspective scores were created by calculating the mean of the parent and child scores for cohesion, adaptability, and overall family functioning (Olson et al., 1992).

The FACES II scale has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties in terms of internal consistency and test-retest reliability. Olson et al. (1992) reported Cronbach Alpha coefficients of .86 and .88 for cohesion and .78 and .79 for adaptability. For the sample in this study, parent internal consistency coefficients were .89 for cohesion and .74 for adaptability. Youth scores demonstrated adequate internal consistency as well for cohesion ( $r = .84$ ) and adaptability ( $r = .77$ ).

The FLAP measures involvement in family leisure activities based on the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning (Zabriskie, 2000). Respondents identify leisure activities done with family members across 16 activity categories. Eight categories of activities are representative of core family leisure patterns (e.g., family dinners, home-based TV/videos, games, and yard activities), and eight categories are representative of balance family leisure patterns (e.g., community-based events, outdoor activities, water-based activities, adventure activities, and tourism). Each question asks if the respondent participates in the activity category with family members. Specific activity examples are included to help clarify and delineate between categories. If the answer is yes, respondents are asked to complete ordinal scales of estimated frequency ("about how often?") and duration ("for about how long each time?") for each activity category.

Scores for the FLAP are calculated by first multiplying the ordinal indicators of frequency

and duration of participation in each category, and then summing the core categories to provide a core family leisure index and summing the balance categories to provide a balance family leisure index. The total family leisure involvement index is calculated by summing the core and balance indices. Multiplicative indices were chosen over the use of either ordinal scaled frequency or duration variables to provide a better measure of overall family leisure involvement. The use of the frequency variable alone would underweight those activities that were done infrequently but for longer durations, and would overweight activities that tend to be done quite frequently for short amounts of time. On the other hand, the use of the duration variable alone would overweight those activities that were done infrequently but for short amounts of time. The product of both ordinal variables provides a more meaningful index representing both frequency and duration of family leisure involvement. Family level scores were created by calculating the mean of the parent and child score for both the core and balance indices. The FLAP has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties including evidence of construct validity, content validity, inter-rater reliability, and test-retest reliability for core ( $r = .74$ ), balance ( $r = .78$ ), and total family leisure involvement ( $r = .78$ ) (Zabriskie, 2001).

A series of sociodemographic questions were included to identify underlying characteristics of the sample and to provide possible controlling factors. Items included age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, history of divorce, single parent family, family size, annual family income, and religious affiliation. Categorical variables were dummy coded, while continuous variables such as age and family size were used in their existing state.

### Analysis

Three data sets were compiled: (a) parent responses, (b) youth responses, and (c) family level measurement (family mean scores for each subject family). Pearson Product Moment

zero-order correlations were calculated for youth, parent, and family level scores. The correlations were examined for significance to identify possible relationships. There were no significant correlations. The magnitude of the correlations did not indicate multiple comparisons (Sudell, 1996). Significant differences were not found in the data set as a result of the variables. The dependent variables in the control factors were unique to the control factor.

Three multivariate analyses were conducted to examine the involvement of youth perspectives. Each analysis used a different entry method. The variables were entered by the family level scores. The second analysis used the second order coefficients model at a 0.05 level. The relative significance of the variables was examined.

The correlations ranged from a mean score of 67 to a mean score of 62.39 ( $SD = 4.2$ ) showing a significant difference in adaptability. Overall family level scores ranged from



zero-order correlations between variables in youth, parent, and family level data sets were examined for multicollinearity as well as to identify possible controlling factors that could be included in subsequent regression equations. There were some significant zero-order correlation coefficients indicated, but the magnitude of the correlation coefficients did not indicate multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Socio-demographic variables indicating significant zero-order correlation coefficients with the dependent variable in each data set as well as other socio-demographic variables thought to be theoretically related to the dependent variable were included as controls in the multiple regression models. The control factors were included to examine the unique contributions of family leisure involvement to family functioning.

Three multiple regression analyses examined the contributions to family leisure involvement from a (a) parent perspective, (b) youth perspective, and (c) family perspective. Each analysis was conducted using blocked entry method. The sociodemographic variables were entered in the first block, followed by the family leisure involvement variables in the second block. The multiple correlation coefficients ( $R^2$ ) were examined for each model at an alpha level of .05, and standardized regression coefficients (Beta) determined the relative contribution of each variable in significant models.

### Findings

The cohesion scores from this sample ranged from 36 to 80. Parents had a mean score of 67.69 ( $SD = 7.87$ ), and the youth had a mean score of 61.00 ( $SD = 9.11$ ). The family scores for cohesion demonstrated a mean of 62.39 ( $SD = 7.77$ ). For adaptability scores, the sample ranged from 12 to 63 with parents showing a mean of 49.97 ( $SD = 6.35$ ), youth 48.2 ( $SD = 7.61$ ), and the family scores for adaptability had a mean of 49.05 ( $SD = 5.81$ ). Overall family functioning scores from the parent, youth, and family level perspectives ranged from 2 to 7.5. Parents' mean family

functioning score was 5.82 ( $SD = 1.19$ ), the youth mean score was 4.93 ( $SD = 1.62$ ), with the family scores for family type having an average of 5.18 (1.33).

Core family leisure index scores from this sample ranged from 18 to 132. Parents had a mean score of 53.81 ( $SD = 19.24$ ), and the youth sample demonstrated a mean score of 46.78 ( $SD = 17.45$ ). The family scores for the core family leisure index had a mean of 49.49 ( $SD = 14.19$ ). Balance family leisure index scores from this sample ranged from 12 to 164. Parents had a mean score of 70.13 ( $SD = 28.40$ ), and the youth had a mean score of 71.35 ( $SD = 29.79$ ). The family scores for the balance family leisure index had a mean of 71.28 ( $SD = 24.53$ ). The total family leisure involvement index scores from this sample ranged from 40 to 259. Parents had a mean score of 124.77 ( $SD = 40.34$ ), and the youth had a mean score of 119.39 ( $SD = 41.33$ ). The family scores for the total family leisure involvement index had a mean of 121.22 ( $SD = 35.18$ ).

Examination of zero-order correlation coefficients indicated a number of significant relationships among the study variables. First, within the parent data set (Table 1), age of the parent, core family leisure patterns, balance family leisure patterns, and total family leisure patterns were found to be significantly correlated with family functioning. Zero-order correlation coefficients indicated that older parents tended to perceive their families as lower functioning and less cohesive than younger parents. Also, based on the zero-order correlations, as family size increased, perceptions of cohesion decreased for the parent. In addition, greater involvement in both core and balance family leisure was related to higher family functioning. Examination of relationships within the youth data (Table 2) indicated that age of youth was negatively related to family functioning and adaptability and older youth also had lower perceptions of family cohesion. As with the parent data, there was a positive correlation between participating in

**Table 1.**  
**Zero Order Correlations Among Study Variables (Parent Perspective)**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	—	-.153*	.113	.126	.159*	.133	-.017	-.127	-.088	-.267**	-.009	-.191**
2. Gender (female)		—	.022	.008	-.202**	-.149*	.034	.002	.008	.103	.122	.118
3. Racial majority			—	.055	-.023	.021	.086	.044	.076	.051	.082	.073
4. Ever divorced				—	.015	.032	.154*	.073	.133	.022	-.049	-.013
5. Annual income					—	.211**	-.029	.157*	.084	.078	.015	.045
6. Family size						—	.112	.096	.135	-.204**	.038	-.095
7. Core FL							—	.404**	.764**	.212**	.259**	.269**
8. Balance FL								—	.899**	.255**	.222**	.304**
9. Total FL									—	.262**	.284**	.334**
10. Cohesion										—	.558**	.875**
11. Adaptability											—	.811**
12. Family functioning												—

Note. FL = family leisure; \*\* $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed); \* $p < 0.05$  (2-tailed).

**Table 2.**  
**Zero Order Correlations Among Study Variables (Youth Perspective)**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	—	-.031	.010	.060	.132	-.229	-.339*	-.304*	-.283*	-.328*	-.314*
2. Gender (female)		—	-.027	.074	.165	-.042	-.045	-.104	-.015	.084	.046
3. Ever divorced			—	.015	.032	.149	.190	.196	-.142	-.120	-.163
4. Annual income				—	.211*	-.053	-.025	-.001	-.254	-.141	-.252
5. Family size					—	.186	-.140	.004	-.165	-.070	-.146
6. Core FL						—	.511**	.792**	.428**	.464**	.467**
7. Balance FL							—	.929**	.301*	.331*	.285*
8. Total FL								—	.412**	.432**	.416**
9. Cohesion									—	.683**	.928**
10. Adaptability										—	.877*
11. Family functioning											—

*Note.* FL = family leisure; \*\* $p < 0.01$  (20 tailed); \* $p < 0.05$  (2-tailed).

both core and balance family leisure and higher family functioning.

Prior to creating family mean variables, zero-order relationships within families were examined (Table 3). The rationale was that, if there was little relationship between parents and children on the study variables, creating a mean from two unrelated variables made little sense. Table 3 indicates that there were at least moderately strong relationships between parents and children on core family leisure ( $r = .434$ ;  $p < .01$ ), balance family leisure ( $r = .549$ ;  $p < .01$ ), total family leisure ( $r = .602$ ;  $p < .01$ ), cohesion ( $r = .543$ ;  $p < .01$ ), adaptability ( $r = .510$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and family functioning ( $r = .577$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Finally, the family level measurement showed similar zero-order relationships as the youth and parent data sets. Mean family functioning, cohesion, and adaptability scores were all positively associated with mean family core and balance leisure involvement.

Following univariate analyses, blocked multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine if family leisure contributed to the explanation of family functioning beyond the zero-order relationships. In the parent data (Table 4) it was found that, although the first block containing the sociodemographic variables did not account for a statistically significant portion of the variance in family functioning ( $R^2 = .076$ ;  $p > .05$ ), age was a significant multivariate negative predictor. The addition of the block of family leisure variables resulted in a statistically significant change ( $R^2\Delta = .104$ ;  $p < .01$ ) in variance explained in family functioning. Both core and balance patterns were significant predictors of family functioning and parents' age also remained statistically significant (Table 4, Block 2).

When the youth data were examined (Table 5), the first block, consisting of only sociodemographic variables, again this did not explain a statistically significant portion of the variance in family functioning ( $R^2 = .264$ ;  $p > .05$ ). Similar to the parents, adding the second block of family leisure variables resulted in a

statistically significant change ( $R^2\Delta = .167$ ;  $p < .05$ ) in the equation predicting family functioning. The addition of the family leisure variables indicated that although both core and balance family leisure were significantly related to family functioning in the univariate case, only core leisure involvement was significantly related to family functioning in the multivariate case (Table 5, Block 2).

Finally, the last regression analysis examined the relationship of family leisure to family functioning using family level measurement. In the family level analysis (Table 6), it can be seen that similar to the parent and youth data, the block of sociodemographic variables did not explain a statistically significant portion of the variance in mean family functioning ( $R^2 = .152$ ;  $p > .05$ ). The addition of the family leisure variables (Table 6, Block 2), however, added a significant portion of explained variance ( $R^2\Delta = .257$ ;  $p < .01$ ) to the model. As with the youth data, only core family leisure was significantly related to family functioning in the multivariate case while both core and balance patterns were significantly related to family functioning in the univariate case.

The sample sizes for the multiple regression analyses for the youth ( $n = 41$ ) and the family level ( $n = 37$ ) data sets were smaller in the multiple regression analyses than the original parent and youth sample size due to the number of youth and adults who did not answer each item on the FLAP. Since the FLAP provides two index scores, one for core leisure activities and one for balance leisure activities, if one item was left blank the entire index score resulted in a zero and consequently was not able to be included in further analyses. There was still sufficient power, however, to determine significant findings in both cases. Furthermore, the range demonstrated by the independent variables and sufficiently high degrees of freedom in the error terms ( $df = 29$ ;  $df = 27$ ) indicate that the analyses were appropriate.

**Table 3.**  
**Zero Order Correlations within Families on Family Leisure and Functioning**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Core FL (p)	—	.434**	.404**	.231	.764**	.330*	.212**	.245	.259**	-.008	.269**	.171
2. Core FL (y)		—	.553**	.511**	.567**	.792**	.331*	.428**	.477**	.464**	.418**	.467**
3. Balance FL (p)			—	.549**	.899**	.652**	.255**	.271*	.222**	.280*	.304**	.295*
4. Balance FL (y)				—	.462**	.929**	.086	.301*	.196	.331*	.142	.285*
5. Total FL (p)					—	.602**	.262**	.259	.284**	.161	.334**	.245
6. Total FL (y)						—	.227	.412**	.388**	.432**	.308*	.416**
7. Cohesion (p)							—	.543**	.558**	.468**	.875**	.563**
8. Cohesion (y)								—	.478**	.683**	.556**	.928**
9. Adaptability (p)									—	.510**	.811**	.518**
10. Adaptability (y)										—	.508**	.877**
11. Family funct. (p)											—	.577**
12. Family funct. (y)												—

*Note.* FL = family leisure; p = parent; y = youth; \*\* $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed); \* $p < 0.05$  (2-tailed).

**Table 4.**  
**Summary of Blocked Regression Equations Predicting Family Functioning (Parent Perspective)**

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$
Block 1 $R^2 = .076$ ( $p > .05$ )			
Age	< -.01	.01	-.20*
Gender (female)	.353	.23	.12
Racial majority	1.18	.66	.14
Family size	< -.01	.04	-.03
Religion majority	< -.01	.26	-.02
Ever divorced	<.01	.28	.01
Annual income	<.01	.04	.06
Block 2 $\Delta R^2 = .104$ ( $p < .01$ )**			
Age	< -.01	.01	-.16*
Gender (female)	.28	.22	.09
Racial majority	.91	.63	.11
Family size	< -.01	.04	-.06
Religion majority	-.29	.25	-.09
Ever divorced	-.18	.27	-.05
Annual income	<.01	.04	.04
Core family leisure	<.01	<.01	.21*
Balance family leisure	<.01	<.01	.20*

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.1$ ;  $n = 157$ .

### Discussion

Findings from this study provide further support for the hypothesized family leisure relationships. A significant positive relationship between family leisure involvement and family functioning, beyond the effects of other family characteristics, was found in all three data sets. Further findings from the parent perspective also supported the hypothesis concerning the nature of the relationship by indicating that both core and balance family leisure contributed equally to the explanation of family functioning. Findings from the youth and family perspective, however, suggested that core family leisure may play a particularly important role in predicting family functioning when considering families with adopted children of color. These findings provide specific implications and direction for therapeutic recreation professionals who work with families.

### Family Leisure and Family Functioning

Findings from this study consistently reported a significant positive relationship between overall family leisure involvement and family functioning across the parent, youth, and family perspectives. With all three data sets in the multivariate case, the sociodemographic variables alone did not yield a significant predictive model of family functioning without the addition of the family leisure variables. In other words, families in this sample indicated that family leisure involvement was the strongest predictor of their family functioning. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge examining the family leisure relationship (Hawkes, 1991; Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Zabriskie, 2000; Zabriskie & McCormick,

Summa

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Note. \* $p$

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**Table 5.**  
**Summary of Blocked Regression Equations Predicting Family Functioning (Youth Perspective)**

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$
Block 1 $R^2 = .264$ ( $p > .05$ )			
Ever divorced	-.63	.72	-.14
Annual income	< -.01	.13	-.13
Age (parent)	< -.01	.05	-.29
Gender (parent, female)	.30	.64	.08
Age (youth)	-.27	.18	-.27
Gender (youth)	< -.01	.54	-.02
Racial majority	-1.72	1.81	-.17
Family size	< -.01	.10	-.07
Religion majority	-.57	1.07	-.10
Block 2 $\Delta R^2 = .167$ ( $p < .05$ )*			
Ever divorced	-.77	.66	-.17
Annual income	-.13	.12	-.17
Age (parent)	< -.01	.05	-.14
Gender (parent, female)	<.001	.62	.01
Age (youth)	-.23	.17	-.22
Gender (youth)	<.01	.50	.02
Racial majority	-2.87	1.69	-.28
Family size	< -.01	.09	-.05
Religion majority	-1.18	1.04	-.20
Core family leisure	<.01	.02	.42*
Balance family leisure	<.01	.01	.12

Note. \* $p < .05$ ;  $n = 41$ .

2001; Zabriskie et al., 2001). It should be noted that these findings add support from a unique sample of families who have a strong likelihood to be involved in the mental health-care system. The findings are also noteworthy in that they report consistent findings from the three different perspectives of parent, child, and family.

Most of the previous research on family leisure is limited to data collected from parents only. Shaw (1997) stated that "almost no data exist on the attitudes and reactions of children to family activities, nor of the outcomes, beneficial or otherwise for these family members" (p. 109). Mactavish and Schleien (1998) concluded that "concentrating on adult-only per-

ceptions may under-estimate the positive value of shared recreation for the family as a whole" (p. 226). Findings from the current study add further insight by not only examining a child's perspective of behavior, but also by presenting a family perspective. By using the parent and child arithmetic means to represent a family perspective, extreme scores appear to have been tempered while consistent trends from both perspectives have been strengthened (see Figure 2). When calculating line graphs with the mean family leisure involvement scores for families at progressive levels of family functioning (based on FACES II scoring), the family level perspective provides a clear picture of the relationship. Findings from the family

**Table 6.**  
**Summary of Blocked Regression Equations Predicting Family Functioning (Family Perspective, means)**

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$
Block 1 $R^2 = .152$ ( $p > .05$ )			
History of Divorce	-.23	.62	-.07
Annual Income	-.13	.10	-.23
Age (parent)	< -.01	.04	-.14
Gender (parent, female)	.28	.51	.11
Age (youth)	-.11	.14	-.14
Gender (youth)	< -.01	.42	-.04
Family Size	< -.01	.01	-.03
Block 2 $\Delta R^2 = .257$ ( $p < .01$ )**			
History of Divorce	-.36	.53	-.10
Annual Income	< -.01	.09	-.13
Age (parent)	< -.01	.04	-.10
Gender (parent, female)	< .01	.44	.03
Age (youth)	< -.01	.13	-.07
Gender (youth)	< -.01	.37	-.03
Family Size	< -.01	.07	-.08
Core Family Leisure	< .01	.02	.55**
Balance Family Leisure	< .01	.01	-.02

Note. \* $p < .05$ ;  $p < .01$ ;  $n = 37$ .

level data set may provide us with the best insight into the family as a whole.

### Core and Balance

Examination of the separate contribution from core and balance family leisure to the prediction of family functioning in all three regression models adds further understanding as to the nature of the family leisure relationship in this sample. In the parent data set, both core and balance family leisure indicated significant correlation coefficients in the multivariate case. Examination of the beta coefficients indicated that both appeared to provide relatively equal contribution to the prediction of family functioning as hypothesized. In other words, that data indicate that both core and balance family leisure involvement play an important role in family functioning. In the

youth data set, however, core family leisure was the only variable that was significantly related to family functioning in the multivariate case, even though both core and balance demonstrated significant univariate relationships. This suggests that when all other factors are taken into account, youth in families of adopted children of color consider core family leisure involvement to play a particularly valuable role in relationship to their evaluation of family functioning.

The additional insight provided by the family perspective also found core family leisure involvement to be the only significant individual predictor of family functioning in the multiple regression model. Families in this sample indicated that regular involvement in common everyday, low-cost, relatively accessible, and often home-based activities with family mem-

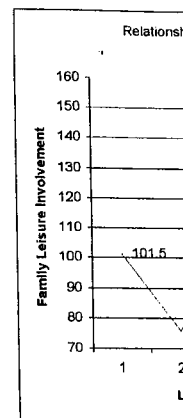


FIGURE 2. LI. (PARENT, YOU)

bers was the best functioning such ings of connect family system's rules, and relatic leisure involvem larly meaningfu functioning of i still likely that between core a involvement. A li distribution of balance family spective indicat



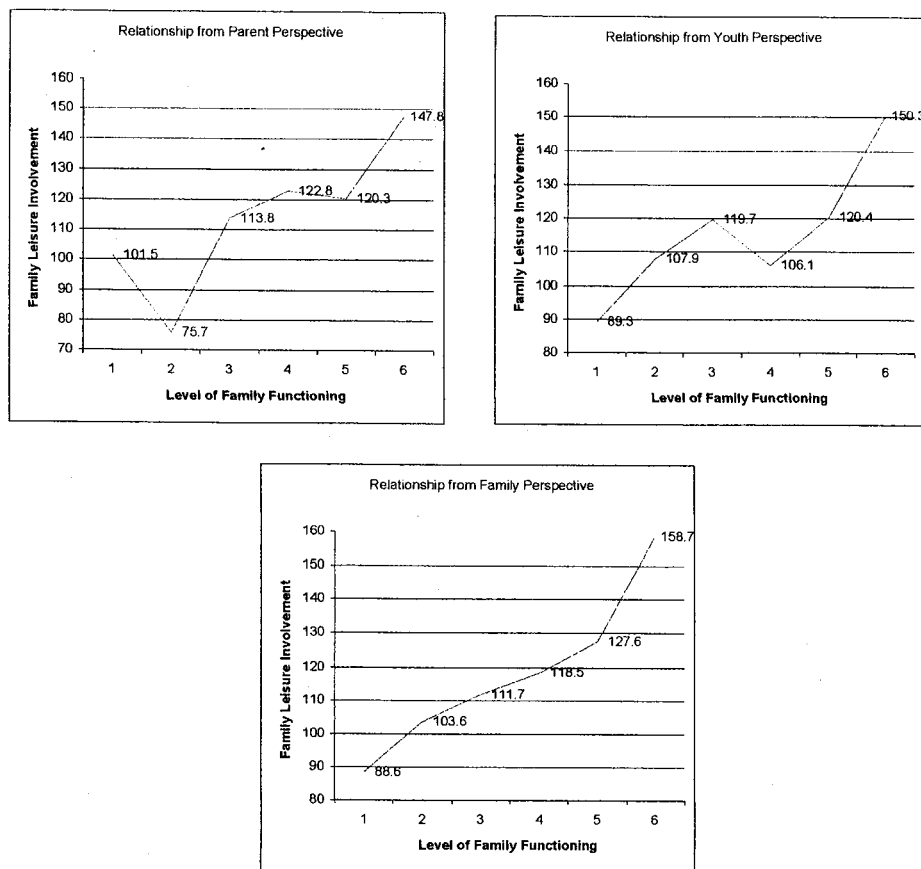


FIGURE 2. LINE GRAPHS OF FAMILY FUNCTIONING AND LEISURE INVOLVEMENT (PARENT, YOUTH, & FAMILY PERSPECTIVE)

bers was the best predictor of aspects of family functioning such as emotional closeness, feelings of connectedness, mutual respect and a family system's ability to be flexible in roles, rules, and relationships. Although core family leisure involvement appears to play a particularly meaningful role related to the family functioning of intact adoptive families, it is still likely that there is an interrelationship between core and balance family leisure involvement. A line graph (see Figure 3) of the distribution of mean z-scores for core and balance family leisure from the family perspective indicates that families increase in

their level of functioning as involvement in both core and balance family leisure increases. While core involvement may be of primary importance, balance family leisure involvement is also part of the equation.

### Implications for Practice

Findings from this study have several valuable implications for therapeutic recreation professionals. Not only do the findings provide further empirical evidence indicating that families who participate in more family leisure also demonstrate higher levels of family functioning than those who have less family leisure

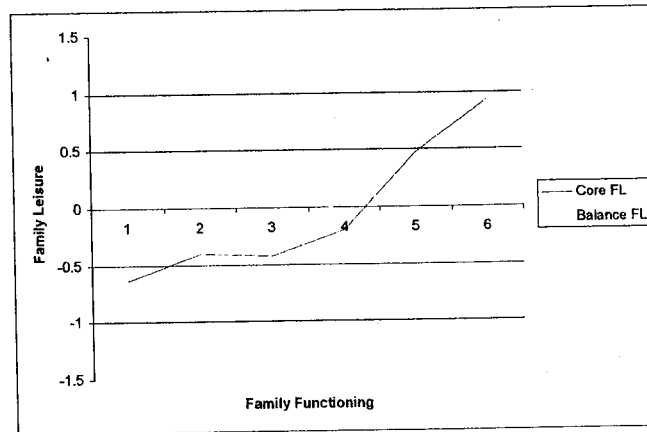


FIGURE 3. LINE GRAPH OF FAMILY FUNCTIONING AND CORE AND BALANCE FAMILY LEISURE (FAMILY PERSPECTIVES)

involvement, they do so from a parent, child, and family viewpoint. Such findings are consistent with those from a prior study (Zabriskie, 2000) that also examined family leisure functioning from multiple perspectives. The current study, however, utilized a specific sample of special-needs adoptive families. As a group, adoptive families are much more likely to have a need for mental health treatment (Erich & Leung, 1998; McRoy, Grotevant, & Zurcher, 1988; Rosenthal & Groze, 1990). Current findings indicate that this sample is more likely to function better if they have increased family leisure involvement. Such findings can provide valuable empirical support to help justify needed family focused therapeutic recreation services for parents, youth, and families receiving mental health treatment.

The contribution of core and balance family leisure involvement to family functioning has specific implications regarding the direction of family leisure programming. Therapeutic recreation programs that do provide family interventions commonly focus on balance types of activities (such as challenge course events, group initiatives, and outdoor adventure activities) that are out of the ordinary, include perceived risk, are challenging, and

appear to have an immediate impact. Although such approaches to programming are often very successful at least in the short term, the findings of the current study suggest that teaching families the skills to be involved in common, home-based, relatively accessible activities together on a regular basis is also a necessary component of family functioning. In fact, the youth and family perspectives suggest that such core family leisure involvement is essential to higher family functioning and may make a more valuable contribution to family life. Clients treated by therapeutic recreation professionals and their families, however, typically struggle with the basic skills needed to spend time together playing a game in the home, shooting baskets, throwing a frisbee, reading together, planting flowers, attending each other's events, or cooking as a family. Opportunities to develop and practice these core family leisure skills must also be included as therapeutic recreation specialists provide services to families. Furthermore, based on the Core and Balance Model, basic skills required for core family leisure involvement are likely to enhance family skills developed through more challenging balance types of interventions.

The Core and Balance model provides a

sound theoretical framework that facilitates our research. The (FLAP) utilizes recreation programming as a sound instructional tool for family involvement used in diagnosis and assessment to determine the needs of the family and can also be used in conjunction with other outcome data. Such interventions and, therefore, specific therapeutic

Although several useful recreation programs provided in this research to identify interventions in relationships study. Family levels may be more family however, this as a working must first be Zabriskie and "besides far one of the members to of time today (2001) described as being facilitated prior related to enhanced family and moral has not been likely that e

sound theoretical framework that can guide therapeutic recreation interventions for families and can provide a consistent structure that facilitates outcome measurement and efficacy research. The Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP) utilized in this study offers therapeutic recreation professionals a psychometrically sound instrument that measures family leisure involvement based on the model. It can be used diagnostically during the assessment process to determine weaknesses and therefore prescribe particular interventions that can address a family's leisure functioning needs. It can also be used during the evaluation process in conjunction with other instruments to collect outcome data at discharge and follow-up dates. Such information can evaluate changes in family leisure behavior based on specific interventions, examine duration of outcomes and, therefore, determine the efficacy of specific therapeutic recreation family programming.

Although findings from this study provide several useful implications for therapeutic recreation providers, it must be recognized that this research did use correlational techniques to identify relationships; therefore, interpretations in terms of the directionality of the relationships cannot be made without further study. Families who already function at high levels may simply be inclined to participate in more family leisure activities. It can be argued, however, that in order to effectively function as a working family system, family members must first spend some quality time together. Zabriskie and McCormick (2001) stated that "besides family crisis, shared leisure may be one of the few experiences that bring family members together for any significant amount of time today" (p. 287). Shaw and Dawson (2001) described family leisure involvement as being purposive and planned which is facilitated primarily by parents to achieve goals related to increased family functioning such as enhanced family communication, cohesion, and moral values. Although this directionality has not been empirically tested, it appears likely that effective family leisure involvement

is generally an antecedent to higher family functioning, and families without necessary family leisure skills can benefit from appropriate intervention.

Recommendations for further research include the examination of the directionality of the family leisure relationship. Longitudinal studies with experimental designs are needed to effectively evaluate the causal effects of family leisure involvement on aspects of family functioning. Such research is recommended to be conducted along with efficacy studies of theoretically sound family leisure programs both in clinical and nonclinical samples. Similar studies that use family samples with other specific known characteristics such as those with family members currently in mental health or substance abuse treatment will also provide further understanding and are recommended. Another useful contribution from this study is the additional insight provided by examining data from a parent, youth, and family perspective. Future research may benefit by gathering data from additional family members including the other parent and older children. Such approaches to research will lead to additional empirical evidence that can help guide therapeutic recreation professionals in their efforts to provide more effective services to individual clients and their families.

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