

The Contribution of Couple Leisure Involvement, Leisure Time, and Leisure Satisfaction to Marital Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this study was to further clarify the relationship between couple leisure patterns and marital satisfaction by examining the contribution of joint couple leisure involvement, leisure time, and leisure satisfaction to couples' satisfaction with married life. The sample consisted of 48 married couples (N = 96). The Marital Activity Profile (MAP), a modified version of the Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP) was used to determine couple leisure involvement in core and balance leisure activities and leisure satisfaction. The Satisfaction With Married Life (SWML), a modified version of the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) was used to measure marital satisfaction. Blocked multiple regression analyses indicated a positive relationship between satisfaction with couple leisure and marital satisfaction, specifically satisfaction with core leisure activity patterns. Implications and recommendations for further research are discussed. doi:10.1300/J002v40n01_05 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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Marital relationships have changed significantly over the past 150 years. Institutional relationships based on stability and security have given way to a more pluralistic view of marriage in which couples are looking for a more flexible marital commitment (Doherty, 1997). As a result of this desire for flexibility, the United States has become known for high divorce rates and the collapse of traditional marriage life (VanDenBerghe, 2000). This is evident in the increasing numbers of marriages ending in divorce. Although nearly all people marry in their lifetime (Bjorksten & Stewart, 1984), almost one-half of all first marriages are expected to end in separation or divorce (Castro-Martin & Bumpass, 1989). About half of those who get divorced get remarried, with even more remarriages ending in divorce (Brody, Neubaum, & Forehand, 1988). Couples and their marital relationships play a vital role in the preservation of the family. Families are “still considered to be the fundamental units of society” (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001, p. 281), and it follows that stronger marriages lead to stronger families and strengthened societies.

As the national divorce rate rises, scholars are paying more attention to marital satisfaction (Stack & Eshelman, 1998) and the factors that affect it, including couple leisure. Previous findings have revealed that couples who participate in activities together are more satisfied with their marriage (Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1990, 1991). However, there is not a clear understanding concerning whether it is the kinds and amount of couple leisure involvement, the satisfaction with or quality of couple leisure involvement, or simply the amount of time spent together that contributes to marital satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to further clarify the relationship between joint couple leisure and marital satisfaction by examining the contribution of couple leisure involvement, satisfaction with couple leisure involvement, and joint couple time to a couple’s satisfaction with married life.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Recent focus on marital satisfaction stems from its centrality to individual and family well-being (Stack & Eshelman, 1998). Marital distress and dissatisfaction have negative consequences for the physical

and emotional well-being of spouses and their children (Bloom, Asher & White, 1978; Emery, 1982). Satisfaction in marriage, on the other hand tends to safeguard spouses from psychological distress and negative life events (Waltz, Bandura, Pfaff, & Schott, 1988). Although several factors have been found to affect marital satisfaction, including children, income, violence, and stress (Belsky, 1985, 1990; Cordova, Jacobson, Gottman, & Rushe, 1993; Greenstein, 1990; Hoffman & Manis, 1978; Markman, 1981; Stack & Eshelman, 1998; Waite & Lillard, 1991), the focus of this study is on the influence of joint couple leisure involvement (Orthner & Mancini, 1990, 1991).

Joint Couple Leisure Model

One early framework for examining couples and their leisure was developed by Orthner and Mancini (1990, 1991). They described three types of leisure among couples which included individual, parallel, and joint activity patterns. These patterns refer to the individuals' participation in the activity and their level of interaction during the experience (Orthner & Mancini, 1990, 1991).

Individual leisure refers to leisure that is done without one's spouse. It is participated in either alone, or with people other than one's spouse. Orthner and Mancini (1990) held that such activities away from one's spouse had a negative influence on marital relationships and marital satisfaction.

Parallel couple leisure refers to individual participation in the same activity at the same time. This type of couple activity calls for little or no communication or interaction, such as watching a movie, or watching television together. The model held that this type of leisure activity represented a false front, suggesting togetherness when it does not necessarily exist. Although a couple may be sitting on the same couch watching the same movie, it does not necessarily mean that their experience together is providing the maximum benefit possible. These leisure activities that typically involve little communication or interaction were said to provide less benefit to couples than others and may actually harm the relationship when they were the primary form of couple leisure activity.

Joint couple leisure describes activities in which couples participate together with high levels of interaction such as playing games together, paddling a canoe, or sailing together. The model held that these types of couple activities were more conducive to optimal communication, alternative role patterning, problem solving, and led to increased marital satisfaction.

Orthner's (1975) concept of joint, parallel, and individual activities for examining couple's leisure provided the framework for one of the few consistent lines of research in this area. Studies consistently reported that husbands and wives who participated in joint leisure activities together were more satisfied with their marriages than those who did not (Holman, 1981; Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Miller, 1976; Orthner, 1975; Smith, Snyder, & Monsma, 1988). Such findings were also consistent in different cultures including studies from Australia, England, and Korea (Ahn, 1982; Bell, 1975; Palisi, 1984). Orthner and Mancini (1991) concluded that the relationship was so pervasive that "that there does not appear to be any recent study that fails to find an association between joint activities and marital satisfaction" (p. 290). Although this line of research provided consistent findings and made a significant contribution to the literature, significant questions remained and further research was called for (Hawkes, 1991; Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1990).

The types of couple leisure activities that were actually measured in this early line of study were somewhat limited and the manner of measurement was clearly limited to time only. It is, therefore, not clear whether it was the types of couple leisure activities, the amount of involvement itself, the quality of or satisfaction with the involvement, or if it was simply increased amount of time spent together as a couple that contributed to increased marital satisfaction. Orthner and Mancini (1990) acknowledged the limitations of the couple leisure model and called for better use of improved theoretical frameworks in future research examining contributions of family and couple leisure. Therefore, a different theoretical framework that has been utilized in examining family leisure involvement may provide a different perspective and further insight into the couple leisure and marital satisfaction relationship.

Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning

The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning (Zabriskie, 2000) is grounded in family systems theory and not only explains how family leisure involvement influences families, but suggests that different kinds of family leisure activities are related to different aspects of family functioning. The model, which has been developed and successfully tested in recent years (Zabriskie, 2000, 2001; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2000) has been utilized as a theoretical framework in a variety of studies examining family leisure (Baker, 2004; Christiansen, 2004; Freeman

& Zabriskie, 2003; Smith, Taylor, Hill, & Zabriskie, 2004; Zabriskie & Freeman, 2003; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Although the model has not been used in previous studies of married couples, it provides a sound framework for examining family leisure involvement, was developed from a family systems perspective, and therefore, is likely to provide a useful and insightful framework for the examination of the primary sub-system within families.

Iso-Ahola (1984) explained that there is a duality in leisure involvement for individuals that results from the balance of two opposing needs that simultaneously influence an individuals' behavior. He states that individuals "seek both stability and change, structure and variety, and familiarity and novelty in [their] leisure" (p. 98). Freeman and Zabriskie (2003) explained that the interplay between the need for both stability and change plays a much greater role when examining the needs of family or couple systems and is a primary underlying concept of family systems theory. Family and couple "systems tend to seek a dynamic state of homeostasis by continually interacting both within themselves and within their ever changing environment" (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). In other words, in order to be healthier and function better, families and couples must meet the need for stability in interactions, structure, and relationships, as well as fulfill the need for novelty in experience, input, and challenge (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Similar to individuals, families and couples also tend to seek the balance between stability and change through their leisure behavior (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning suggests that there are two interrelated categories or basic types of family leisure involvement (core and balance), which families utilize to meet needs of stability and change, and ultimately facilitate outcomes of cohesion and adaptability which are the primary components of family functioning. The model has also been utilized to examine the contributions of core and balance leisure involvement to the related construct of family satisfaction (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003).

Core couple leisure involvement can be depicted by joint participation in activities that are common, regular, relatively accessible, and usually home/neighborhood-based. This may include activities such as eating dinner together, watching television or videos together, and playing board games or going on walks together. They tend to require little planning and resources, and are often spontaneous and informal. They are consistent, safe, positive, and provide a context in which to foster relationships (Zabriskie, 2000). Couples participating in core activities

can safely explore boundaries, clarify couple/family roles and rules, and practice ways to enforce them. Spouses can be consoled, rewarded, refreshed, and rejuvenated through regular core leisure involvement.

The playful interaction and relaxed conversation enjoyed among couples, while completing household duties such as laundry or doing dishes together may also need to be included as a core activity for couples. Such regular activities may become a leisure choice that is looked forward to among couples in which they can enjoy each other's company and complete household work at the same time. These chosen regular activities performed side by side are likely to help develop relationships, foster communication, and increase understanding of one another. Regular personal interaction based on shared experiences enhances the knowledge of co-participants and, thus, fosters increased personal relatedness and feelings of closeness and cohesion (Zabriskie, 2000).

Balance couple leisure involvement can be depicted by joint participation in activities that are less common, less frequent, often out of the ordinary and provide novel experiences. This may include activities such as vacations, special events, most outdoor recreation like camping, fishing, and hiking, and trips to a sporting event or theatrical performance. These activities are likely to require greater investment of resources, such as effort, time, or money, and are usually not home-based. They often require more planning and are, therefore, less spontaneous and more formalized (Zabriskie, 2000). Balance types of joint activities require couples to negotiate and adapt to new input, experiences, or challenges, facilitate the development of adaptive skills, and the ability to learn and change. They also tend to expose couples to new and unexpected stimuli from the outside environment, which provides the input and challenge necessary for couples to learn and progress as an evolving and developing relationship system (Zabriskie, 2000).

The Core and Balance Model suggests that families who regularly participate in both core and balance family leisure activities are likely to function better and have greater family satisfaction than those who participate in extremely high or low amounts of either category. Therefore, when considering couples the model would indicate that while different couple leisure patterns may meet different needs and contribute to different aspects of a couples functioning or marital satisfaction, the inter-relationship between both core and balance couple leisure involvement is necessary in order to positively influence marital satisfaction. The use of this model as the framework for the current study may help provide con-

siderable insight and add further understanding as to the relationship between couple leisure patterns and marital satisfaction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The majority of the studies that have examined the relationship between couple leisure involvement and marital satisfaction come from the early line of research based on the individual, parallel, and joint couple leisure framework (Orthner, 1975). This early line of study must be acknowledged because it was perhaps the most influential and consistent group of studies examining marital satisfaction at the time, both nationally and internationally.

Limitations in measurement and the framework itself, however, restricted further research and implications, and there have been few studies in the area since. The few subsequent studies clarify some early findings particularly in regard to the negative effect of individual leisure involvement on couple satisfaction. Studies of leisure satisfaction may also add insight into the current examination of the couple leisure, marital satisfaction relationship.

Couple Leisure

Early studies (Smith, Snyder, & Monsma, 1988; Orthner & Mancini, 1991) consistently reported that engagements in individual pursuits and interaction with others to the exclusion of one's spouse were good predictors of global marital distress, and the absence of marital satisfaction. Holman and Jaquart (1988), as well as Orthner and Mancini (1990), also found that a negative relationship existed between individual leisure and marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives.

Although it has been found that couples who participate in individual activities experience lower levels of marital satisfaction (Hill, 1988; Holman & Jaquart, 1988; Orthner, 1975; Smith, Snyder, & Monsma, 1988), it has also been found that participation in shared activities, or commitment to the same activities, was not essential to marital satisfaction if the spouses perceived that their partners supported their individual activity choices. When one spouse is committed to an activity and the other is not, significant support from that individual's spouse helps affirm the role of the spouse and promote marital satisfaction (Baldwin et al., 1999). This support could be expressed in many different ways, such as holding conversations about the spouse's participation and per-

formance in the activity, arranging schedules to accommodate watching their spouse participate in the activity, or giving equipment related to the activity as gifts (Baldwin et al., 1999).

Studies suggest that support in the pursuit of a personally meaningful goal or behavior plays an important role in maintaining high levels of well-being (Brunstein, Dangelmayer, & Schultheiss, 1996; Baldwin et al., 1999). As perceived support increases, marital satisfaction also increases, and it has been found that those who participate in supported independent recreation activities reported higher marital satisfaction than those who participated in fully independent activities (Baldwin et al., 1999; Wan, Jaccard, & Ramey, 1996; Julien, & Markman, 1991). These findings are important because couples do not always enjoy the same types of activities. Couples who have different interests and participate in individual activities without their spouse will not necessarily experience a decline in their marital satisfaction, as long as there is significant support from their partner concerning the individual activity. Support concerning individual activity participation plays a large role in increasing marital satisfaction (Baldwin et al., 1999).

Orthner (1975) found that parallel couple leisure activities have a positive but moderate impact on marital satisfaction among both husbands and wives. Palisi (1984) reported similar findings in his international study examining couples in Australia, California, and England, indicating that although there was a relationship between parallel couple leisure activities and marital satisfaction, it was lower than that of joint couple leisure activities. Holman and Jaquart (1988) used a slightly different approach to measurement and found that parallel marital activities had a negative relationship with marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. They concluded that such parallel leisure activities with limited interaction or communication provided limited benefit and may actually hurt the marital relationship.

Perhaps, one of the most consistent findings in this line of study was the positive relationship between involvement in joint couple leisure activities and marital satisfaction. Orthner (1975) began reporting such findings in the mid-seventies and others (Holman, 1981; Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Miller, 1976; Orthner, 1975; Smith, Snyder, & Monsma, 1988) consistently reported the same relationship from diverse samples in the United States as well as from samples collected in Australia, England, and Korea (Ahn, 1982; Bell, 1975; Palisi, 1984). These types of activities are conducive to optimal communication, interaction, and alternative role patterning. A more recent study (Baldwin et al., 1999) still confirmed this consistent finding and reported that couples who

share leisure time together in joint activities tend to be much more satisfied with their marriages than those who don't.

Baldwin et al. (1999) also found, however, that there were no significant differences between couples who participated in joint recreation together and couple's who did not, but who were highly supportive of each other in individual leisure pursuits. For example, a husband might enjoy running in races; his wife dislikes running, but comes and watches him run every race. While she does not actually run, the couple does enjoy joint leisure participation in the experience which is still related to higher marital satisfaction. Overall, findings consistently indicate that whether couples participate in joint leisure activities or whether they support each other in individual pursuits and thus have a joint leisure experience, they consistently report higher levels of marital satisfaction.

Leisure Satisfaction

Leisure satisfaction has also been studied in regard to its relationship to life satisfaction (Russell, 1987, 1990). Russell (1987) compared the influence of several activities on life satisfaction with one of those activities being recreation or leisure. She hypothesized that leisure participation and leisure satisfaction would be stronger predictors of life satisfaction than all the other activities. The results indicated that religiosity had a slightly higher influence on life satisfaction than leisure participation. Nevertheless, satisfaction with leisure had a much greater influence than either religiosity or leisure participation. Russell determined that it was the satisfaction with the leisure activity involvement that impacted the life satisfaction rather than the frequency of involvement.

In a similar study, Russell (1990) examined the interrelationship among leisure and other life circumstance variables, one of which was quality of life. The findings indicated that religiosity, sex, education, marital status, and age were significantly related to income, health, leisure activity participation, and leisure satisfaction. However, these variables were not found to influence quality of life directly. The only significant and direct predictor of quality of life was satisfaction with leisure involvement.

Although no similar studies have been conducted examining couples leisure satisfaction, Baldwin et al.'s (1999) findings related to the value of spousal support of individual leisure pursuits versus the actual joint participation suggest that there may be similarities among couples as well. Particularly when considering the changing context for a couple

over the family life cycle, it is possible that satisfaction with joint couple leisure involvement may play as significant a role in explaining marital satisfaction as the participation itself.

Overall, past research has clearly identified a link between couple leisure and marital satisfaction. Findings, however, are still unclear as to whether it is the amount or type of couple leisure involvement, the satisfaction with the involvement, or simply the time spent together that influences a couples' satisfaction with their marriage. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to use the Core and Balance framework to examine the contribution of joint couple leisure involvement, satisfaction with joint couple involvement, and joint couple time, to overall marital satisfaction.

METHODS

Sample

Subject couples ($n = 48$) were recruited door to door through a convenience snowball sampling method in a mid-size western suburban area (population approximately, 400,000). As a result of this door-to-door recruitment strategy there were no couples that refused to participate in this study. A total of 53 married couples were contacted. In five of the couples only one of the spouses completed the entire survey, therefore responses from these five couples were not included in the study. The final sample comprised 48 married couples yielding data from 96 individuals. No significant differences were identified between husband and wife responses in any of the research variables, therefore separate analyses were not conducted. The respondents ranged in age from 18-76 with a mean of 31.89 ($SD = 12.68$). Concerning ethnicity, the majority (95%) were white, the remainder included Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics. The number of children each couple had ranged from 0 to 10 with a mean of 2.08 ($SD = 2.33$). Years married ranged from 1 to 48 with a mean of 10.18 years ($SD = 12.23$). Couples income ranged from less than 10,000 dollars a year to 126,000-150,000 dollars a year, with a mean of 31,000-40,000 dollars a year ($SD = 20,000$). There was only one woman in this sample who had experienced a divorce, and had remarried. Her responses referenced her current marriage. No compensation was given to respondents who participated.

Instrumentation

The research questionnaire included the following scales: (1) The 15-item Marital Activity Profile (MAP), which measures couple leisure involvement and leisure satisfaction based on the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning (Zabriskie, 2000); (2) the Satisfaction with Married Life Scale (SWML) that measures satisfaction with married life based on the respondents own criteria; (3) three questions that measure satisfaction with joint couple time and (4) relevant sociodemographic questions.

The MAP measures involvement in marital leisure activities based on the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning (Zabriskie, 2000). It is a slightly modified version of the Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP), which has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties (Zabriskie, 2001). The primary modification was the replacement of the phrase “with your family” with the phrase “with your spouse” when asking about participation in leisure activities. Other minor modifications included adding some activity examples to better reflect couple activities within a category and the substitution of two categories that did not clearly fit for couples with two categories needed for couples (e.g., household cooking/cleaning and leisure-based communication). All other aspects of the instrument including format, scoring procedures, and leisure satisfaction items remained the same.

Respondents identify leisure activities done with their spouse across 15 activity categories. Eight categories of activities are representative of core marital leisure patterns (e.g., home-based TV/videos together, regular communication, and playing games together) and seven categories are representative of balance marital leisure patterns (e.g., community-based events, outdoor activities, adventure activities, and travel or tourism together). Each question root asks if the respondent participates in the activity category with their spouse. Specific examples are included with each question to help 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 per time?”), as well as satisfaction with participation with your spouse in the root activity. Respondents are asked to answer the satisfaction question, which is measured on a 5-point Likert scale even if they do not participate in the root activity with their spouse.

Scores for the MAP 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 marital leisure index

and summing the balance categories to provide a balance marital leisure index. The total couple leisure involvement score is calculated by summing the Core and Balance indices. The satisfaction with couple leisure score is calculated by summing the satisfaction responses for the core items and balance items. The original FLAP has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties including evidence of construct validity, content validity, and test-retest reliability for core ($r = .74$), balance ($r = .78$), and total family leisure involvement ($r = .78$) (Zabriskie, 2001). The MAP was designed for the current study and no specific evidence of validity and reliability for its use is available yet.

The SWML is a modified version of the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) in which the words "married life" replaced the word "life" as it was in the original items. The SWML requires respondents to agree or disagree with five statements about married life on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree. Scoring consists of summing all items, which produces a satisfaction with married life score that ranges from 5 to 35. The original scale has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Internal consistency for the modified scale used in the current study was reported at an acceptable level ($\alpha = .92$).

Satisfaction with the amount of time spent with spouse was measured by three items addressing a couples' time together that required subjects to respond to a 5-point Likert-type scale for each item. 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, number of children, years married, past marital status, and estimated annual income.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to examine underlying characteristics of the study sample. An independent samples T-test was used to examine differences in research variables between husbands and wives. Pearson Product Moment zero-order correlations between variables were examined for multicollinearity as well as to identify possible controlling factors that could be included in subsequent regression equations. Although there were some significant zero-order correlations indicated, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients did not indicate multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) except for the cases in which variables were derived from previous variables such as total

couple leisure involvement and total couple leisure satisfaction. Therefore, they were not included in the same regression analysis.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted using a blocked entry method. Couple leisure involvement variables (core leisure involvement, balance leisure involvement) and couple leisure time were included in the first block, followed by the couple leisure satisfaction variables (core couples leisure satisfaction and balance couple leisure satisfaction) in the second block. The multiple correlation coefficients (R^2) were examined at an alpha level of .05 and standardized regression coefficients (Beta) were used to determine the relative contribution of each variable in a significant model.

FINDINGS

Scores from the SWML scale ranged from 12 to 35 with a mean of 28.80 ($SD = 5.64$). The MAP provided index scores for core, balance, and total couple leisure involvement and satisfaction with core, balance, and total couple leisure involvement. Core couple leisure scores ranged from 16 to 104 with a mean of 50.79 ($SD = 18.48$). Balance couple leisure scores ranged from 8 to 120 with a mean of 53.21 ($SD = 24.06$). Total couple leisure involvement scores ranged from 36 to 188 and had a mean of 105.04 ($SD = 32.13$). Satisfaction with core couple leisure involvement ranged from 15 to 40 with a mean of 30.01 ($SD = 5.29$). Satisfaction with balance couple leisure involvement ranged from 14 to 33 with a mean of 24.68 ($SD = 4.47$). Finally, satisfaction with total couple leisure ranged from 31 to 75 with a mean of 55.09 ($SD = 9.54$). Satisfaction with joint couple time ranged from 3 to 9 with a mean of 6.52 ($SD = 1.90$).

Examination of the zero-order correlation coefficients indicated no significant relationships between couple marital satisfaction and any of the demographic variables including age, gender, number of children, years married, past marital status, and estimated annual income (see Table 1). There were also no significant relationships reported between marital satisfaction and core leisure involvement, balance leisure involvement or satisfaction with joint couple time (see Table 2). There was a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and satisfaction with core and balance couple leisure involvement.

Following univariate analyses, a blocked multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the contributions of independent variables to the explanation of marital satisfaction beyond the zero-order

TABLE 1. Zero Order Correlations Among Demographic Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Marital satisfaction	–	–.030	.126	–.022	–.071	.021
2. Age		–	–.119	.768**	.979**	.517**
3. Gender			–	–.010	–.025	–.027
4. Number of children				–	.768**	.644**
5. Number of years married					–	.513**
6. Income						–

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2. Zero Order Correlations Among Research Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Marital satisfaction	–	.132	–.011	.039	.014	.670**	.445**	.677**
2. Core couple CLI***		–	.159	.691**	–.088	.206	.202	.179
3. Balance couple CLI			–	.824**	–.006	–.038	.272*	.143
4. Total CLI				–	–.107	.064	.316*	.193
5. Sat w/couple time					–	.116	.152	.153
6. Sat w/core CLI						–	.712**	.948**
7. Sat w/balance CLI							–	.883**
8. Sat w/total CLI								–

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. ***CLI = couple leisure involvement.

relationships (see Table 3). The first block consisted of core couple leisure involvement, balance couple leisure involvement, and satisfaction with joint couple time, and did not account for a statistically significant portion of the variance in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .024$; $p > .05$). After adjusting for the first block the satisfaction with couple leisure involvement variables were added, which resulted in a statistically significant change ($\Delta R^2 = .429$; $p < .01$) in variance explained in marital satisfaction.

TABLE 3. Summary of Blocked Regression Equations Predicting Couple Leisure Satisfaction

Variable	B	SE B	β
Block 1 $R^2 = .024$ (<i>ns</i>)			
Core couple leisure index	.029	.041	.097
Balance couple leisure index	.020	.031	.091
Total couple leisure time	.233	.425	.074
Block 2 $\Delta R^2 = .429$ ($ps < .01$)**			
Core couple leisure index	.002	.032	.005
Balance couple leisure index	.023	.026	.102
Total couple leisure time	-.011	.343	-.003
Core couple leisure satisfaction	.748	.169	.710**
Balance couple leisure satisfaction	-.110	.211	-.089

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. $n = 96$

Although satisfaction with both core and balance couple2 leisure involvement was significant in the univariate case, satisfaction with core couple leisure involvement was the only significant predictor of marital satisfaction in the multivariate case (see Table 3, Block 2).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to use the Core and Balance framework to examine the contribution of joint couple leisure involvement, satisfaction with joint couple involvement and joint couple time, to overall marital satisfaction. Overall, couples in this study indicated that it was not the level or amount of couple leisure involvement or the satisfaction with the amount of time spent together, but the satisfaction with couple leisure that contributed to marital satisfaction. Such findings are consistent with previous family theory and leisure research (Russell, 1987, 1990). Findings also add considerable clarification and insight into the early line of research with couple leisure and marital satisfaction

(Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1990, 1991). Although study limitations must be considered, findings have significant practical and scholarly implications.

Perhaps, the most significant contribution from the current findings is that the best predictor of marital satisfaction was satisfaction with leisure involvement. In other words, it appears that the quality of couple leisure involvement was much more important than the amount of time spent together or the amount and level of leisure involvement itself when considering marital satisfaction. Couples that were satisfied with their leisure involvement with their spouse, regardless of the amount or type of involvement, were clearly more satisfied with their marriage than couples who may have participated in more or different kinds of leisure activities but were not satisfied with that participation.

These findings are consistent with existing family literature and add further insight to this line of study. A family systems perspective suggests that more is not always better and that couples should interact at a comfortable level for their individual relationship. The Circumplex Model (Olsen & DeFrain, 1994) is a graphical representation of family relationships, is based on systems theory, and can be applied to couple relationship systems as well. The model suggests that families and couples that report moderate levels of cohesion and adaptability tend to function higher than those who have extreme high or low levels of cohesion and adaptability. Furthermore, the model suggests that families and couples tend to function better where they feel most comfortable. Although this might not be where other families function, as long as the entire family is comfortable there, the family can experience optimum benefits from their relationships with each other. Current findings support this model and appear to be similar for couples and their leisure involvement as it relates to marital satisfaction. What is right for one couple may be too much or too little for another. Therefore, it appears to be more important for couples to be comfortable with their leisure involvement rather than to participate in a specific amount. This is the first study that has provided such support to this model by measuring a different construct such as couple leisure involvement.

The Circumplex Model also addresses the concept of a "dynamic family." Dynamic families may function at extremes for short periods of time, but they always find their way back to homeostasis, where they are most comfortable. Dynamic families also recognize the need for change throughout the course of the family life cycle and must acknowledge and adjust to changes in family structure. Current findings support the "dynamic family" concept and suggest that higher functioning cou-

ples are able to adjust their joint leisure patterns over the course of their lives. Dynamic couples recognize that over the course of a family life cycle, they will have to make adjustments regarding the amount and types of leisure activities they are able to participate in together. For example, couples that have small children reportedly have much less time for couple leisure (Witt & Goodale, 1981), while those in the empty nest phase may have more time for joint leisure involvement. Current findings suggest that couples that are able to adjust the amount and type of couple leisure involvement so that they are both satisfied within their current context also report higher marital satisfaction. With couple leisure satisfaction being the most significant contributor to the explanation of marital satisfaction, it can be presumed that couples can work to find the proper amount of leisure involvement for their particular relationship throughout the changing stages of the family life cycle.

Current findings are also consistent with previous leisure research and support Russell's (1987) study, comparing the influence of an individual's leisure on life satisfaction. Russell determined that it was the satisfaction with leisure that impacted life satisfaction rather than the frequency or amount of involvement. In a similar study, Russell (1990) examined the interrelationships among leisure, other life circumstance variables such as religiosity, gender, education, marital status, and age, and their influence on quality of life. The only significant and direct predictor of quality of life was leisure satisfaction. Current findings support those of Russell (1987, 1990) from a couple's leisure context by indicating that it is the satisfaction with leisure participation, not the amount or type of leisure participation, which influences the satisfaction with married life.

Findings also support and add additional clarification to the early line of couple leisure research. Historically, researchers (Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Miller, 1976; Orthner, 1975; Smith, Snyder, & Monsma, 1988) have consistently reported positive relationships between joint couple leisure activities and marital satisfaction, from an individual, parallel, and joint activity pattern framework. Consistent findings were also reported from international studies including those from Australia (Palisi, 1984), England (Bell, 1975), and Korea (Ahn, 1982). However, the types of couple leisure activities that were actually measured in this early line of study were somewhat limited and the manner of measurement was clearly limited to time only. Authors acknowledged the limitations of these studies and called for further research with improved theoretical frameworks. Current findings provide continued support for this line of couple leisure research by reporting a continued relationship

between couple leisure and marital satisfaction. Findings are, however, able to add further insight into this relationship by suggesting that it is not necessarily the amount of couple leisure involvement but the satisfaction with that involvement that contributes to marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the use of the Core and Balance family leisure framework allowed for the examination of different types of couple leisure patterns. Findings clearly indicated that satisfaction with core couple leisure involvement (home based, common, and everyday leisure activities) was the most significant contributor to increased marital satisfaction.

Implications and Recommendations

Findings from this study have several valuable implications for professionals who work with couples. Findings provide further empirical evidence indicating that couple leisure involvement is related to overall marital satisfaction. The role of couple leisure involvement is often overlooked by professionals who work with couples. Based on these findings, however, it is clear that couple leisure involvement is an integral component of marital satisfaction and must be acknowledged and addressed. Another insight from these findings that must be considered is that the satisfaction with couple leisure involvement appears to play a much greater role in marital satisfaction than does the amount of leisure involvement or simply spending more time together. Therefore, professionals can help couples address and negotiate issues related to leisure involvement and the satisfaction with their involvement within their current family structure.

Furthermore, the importance of regular, common, often home-based leisure activities together should also be considered. Often when couple leisure involvement is addressed by professionals or used as a treatment modality, emphasis is placed on those activities that are out of the ordinary or different such as new challenging events or vacations. While such activities often have great impact, particularly during a treatment situation, findings from this study indicate that regular joint activities such as eating dinner together, reading, gardening, and talking while washing dishes may contribute more to overall marital satisfaction.

Although findings provide several useful implications, limitations from this study must be recognized. The study used correlational techniques and, therefore, interpretations in terms of the directionality of the relationship between leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction cannot be made without further research. Furthermore, the current sample was relatively small and homogenous. Future research should consider a

larger sample of couples from a broader, more diverse geographical population. Utah is known as a predominantly religious society with approximately 60% of its population reported as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). The LDS religion is strongly focused on families. Emphasis is placed on spending time together with one's spouse and family. Although there were no questions referencing religious affiliation in the current study, given the opportunity to perform the same study in an environment that is more religiously diverse may yield different findings.

It is recommended that further work also be completed regarding the Marital Activity Profile (MAP). Activity categories for the instrument were slightly modified from the original FLAP (Zabriskie, 2000) for families. While the MAP appears to have demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties, no specific validity and reliability work have been conducted. Such work should be completed prior to further research with this instrumentation.

Findings from this study also suggest several other recommendations for future research. First, couple activity patterns clearly may play different roles and, therefore, contribute in different ways to marital satisfaction in different stages of the family life cycle. Therefore, examination of the contribution of family leisure involvement and leisure satisfaction to marital satisfaction within different marital categories across the life span would clearly add further insight to this line of study.

Second, more consideration needs to be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation. For example, do spouses participate out of guilt or because they want to? Who decides what to do, and what state of mind are the couples in when they participate in the activities together? Such questions are likely to play a role in how satisfied couples are with their activity participation. Qualitative methodologies are likely to provide the greatest insight into the motivation behind couple's participation or lack of participation in joint leisure activities.

Third, more attention could be given to responses as couples, instead of as individuals. Scholars have consistently reported significant findings related to family leisure involvement from family perspectives derived from parent and child data sets (Freeman & Zabriskie, 2003; Zabriskie & Freeman, 2004; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Similar methodologies should be used when examining couple leisure involvement. Examining husbands' and wives' responses together could provide additional information and insight into the couple leisure and marital satisfaction relationship, by providing a couples' perspective.

Finally, it is recommended that couple leisure and marital satisfaction should be explored in relationship with measures of marital communication. Previous research has indicated that effective communication is vital to marital satisfaction (Cordova et al., 1993). Orthner (1975) reported a significant relationship between participation of husbands and wives in joint leisure and the level of their communication. Presvelou (1971) provided additional support noting that the frequency of joint leisure activities was positively related to marital communication, especially non-verbal communication such as caring. Therefore, the consideration of marital communication may add further insight to the current findings as they relate to couples leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and their overall marital satisfaction.

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