

The Influences of Family Leisure Patterns on Perceptions of Family Functioning*

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This study conducted a preliminary test of a model of family leisure functioning by examining the relationship of core and balance family leisure patterns to family cohesion and adaptability. We hypothesized that core family leisure patterns address family needs for stability, facilitate the development of cohesive relationships, and are related to perceptions of family cohesion, whereas balance family leisure patterns address family needs for change, facilitate the development of adaptive skills, and are related to perceptions of family adaptability. Findings from 2 multiple regression analyses provided preliminary support for the model. Conclusions and implications are discussed.

Families are still considered to be the fundamental units of society and are perhaps the oldest and most important of all human institutions. Examinations of family leisure have consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between family recreation and aspects of family functioning such as satisfaction and bonding (Hawkes, 1991; Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1991). It has 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), yet the nature of the family leisure relationship remains poorly understood. Much of the research in the area lacks an adequate theoretical framework, which has limited findings "to the idiosyncrasies of the investigation at hand" (Orthner & Mancini, 1991, p. 299). The majority of the family leisure literature is also based on inferences made from studies of married couples and assumes that the effects of leisure involvement are the same for other family systems. Furthermore, leisure is often conceptualized in a simplistic, atheoretical, and inconsistent manner. This leaves little foundation upon which researchers can build theoretical frameworks, test hypotheses, and interpret results. It appears that in order to significantly affect this line of research, there is a need to identify a theoretical model of family leisure that relates well with a theory of family functioning, so as to create a sound foundation upon which family leisure research can be based. The purpose of this study was to conduct a preliminary test of the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning.

Theoretical Framework

Family Systems

Family systems theory holds that families are goal directed, self-correcting, dynamic, interconnected systems that both affect and are affected by their environment and by qualities within the family system itself (Klein & White, 1996). Based on family

systems theory, a number of models have been developed. One of the most widely used is Olson's (1986) Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems. Olson's approach to family systems has a broad range of applications that successfully cut across the social and behavioral sciences, as well as the diversity of today's families.

Olson's Circumplex Model revolves around two main dimensions of family cohesion and adaptability and is said to be facilitated by a third dimension, communication (Olson, 1993). Olson characterized family cohesion as "the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another" (p. 105). It is this dimension that balances the importance of independence or differentiation with the mutuality of being a member of a family system. Family adaptability is related to the family's flexibility in leadership roles and in rules of relationships. It is this dimension that refers to the family system's need to appropriately change, to be flexible, or to adapt and learn from different experiences and situations. Using Olson's terminology, families that are either too enmeshed or disengaged (cohesion dimension) or too chaotic or rigid (adaptability dimension) for extended amounts of time function less effectively than those operating in the middle. In other words, "too little or too much cohesion or adaptability is seen as dysfunctional to the family system" (Olson, 1986, p. 339). The third dimension in the Circumplex Model is family communication, which Olson (1993) considers to be a critical "facilitating dimension" (p. 108). Through effective communication and interactive skills, families facilitate their movement along the other two dimensions. Because most unstructured communication in families occurs during discretionary time, leisure experiences may provide one of the best opportunities for communication among families today (Orthner & Mancini, 1991).

Family Systems Theory and College Student Samples

Although a number of previous studies have examined perceived family functioning in college student samples, this body of research has typically studied reported family functioning as an independent variable indicative of dependent variables of personal functioning. Studies have tended to indicate that cohesion and adaptability are indicative of different characteristics of personal functioning. For example, family cohesion has been found to be inversely related to suicidal ideation (Zhang & Jin, 1996) and positively related to self-concept (Wilson & Constantine, 1999), psychological health (Amerikaner, Monks, Wolfe, & Thomas, 1994), and homesickness (Kazantzis & Flett, 1998). Other studies have found family adaptability to be inversely related to suicidal ideation (Carris, Sheeber, & Howe, 1998) and

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positively related to creativity (Gardner & Moran, 1990), interpersonal relationship quality (Robinson, Garthoeffner, & Henry, 1995), and dispositional optimism (Boyd, 1996). Interestingly enough, only suicidal ideation has been found to be related to both cohesion and adaptability; however, these findings come from two different studies. In general, both perceived cohesion and adaptability have been found to be related to different aspects of personal functioning among college students. However, little is known about college students' perceptions of family behaviors, such as shared activity, and family functioning.

Family Leisure

Researchers have examined recreation and leisure patterns in families for over 60 years and have consistently reported positive relationships between family leisure involvement and positive family outcomes (Hawkes, 1991; Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1991). Furthermore, it appears that understanding of the family leisure and family functioning relationship can be enhanced through the use of a family systems perspective. However, although family leisure has been examined for some time, there are consistent criticisms that are common to the majority of past studies.

Family leisure outcomes. Studies of recreation and leisure benefits for families have been categorized in terms of family outcomes including family satisfaction, family interaction, and family stability (Orthner & Mancini, 1991). Most of this research addresses family satisfaction, usually marital satisfaction. Findings consistently report that husbands and wives who share leisure time together, participating in joint recreational activities, are more satisfied with their marriages than those who do not (Holman, 1981; Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Miller, 1976; Orthner, 1975; Smith, Snyder, & Monsma, 1988). This relationship also has proved consistent in studies from Australia, England, and Korea (Ahn, 1982; Bell, 1975; Palisi, 1984). In fact, this relationship is so pervasive "that there does not appear to be any recent study that fails to find an association between joint activities and marital satisfaction" (Orthner & Mancini, 1991, p. 290).

Although studies addressing family interaction outcomes are less common, results consistently indicate positive relationships between such outcomes and marital leisure patterns. Orthner (1976) identified a strong relationship between joint leisure activities and positive husband and wife communication. Other studies indicate that joint marital activities of couples are positively related to marital communication (Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Presvelou, 1971). In addition, Shaw (1999) found that parents perceived family leisure as an opportunity for family communication, bonding, child development, and learning. Finally, Mactavish and Schleien (1998) examined parents' perceived benefits of family recreation in families that included children with a developmental disability. Among other findings, they concluded that "shared recreation was especially helpful in developing social skills such as learning to problem solve, to compromise, and to negotiate" (p. 221).

Research that addresses the effects of leisure on family stability is the least common. However, Hill's (1988) study of marital stability and spouses' shared leisure stands out as one of the few that has findings supporting a causal relationship between leisure and family stability. Using data from a 5-year national study, Hill found a significant relationship between shared leisure time and lower divorce and separation rates, even when controlling for a number of other factors that could influence sta-

bility. Her findings stand alone in providing longitudinal evidence suggesting that families that play together actually do stay together.

Family leisure and systems theory. Orthner and Mancini (1991) reviewed several aspects of family leisure experience that coincide with a family systems theoretical approach. Family systems concepts, such as family boundaries, are strengthened and clarified through common leisure involvement. Shared interests and activities may be one of the most salient forces establishing and maintaining boundaries in the contemporary family system (Marks, 1989). Other family systems concepts, such as rules and their enforcement, often are practiced and tested in the context of leisure. Family leisure activities provide opportunities for interaction among members, as well as for interaction of the family system with its changing environment. This interaction offers new input, energy, and motivation needed for continued family system development. Furthermore, it facilitates the flow of information through the system, creates memorable experiences for archival comparisons, and provides a context for ongoing monitoring of its members' functioning.

The three dimensions of Olson's (1986) Circumplex Model (cohesion, adaptability, and communication) appear to be facilitated through family leisure as well. In referring to six decades of family recreation research, Hawkes (1991) stated that "it has been demonstrated that family strength or cohesiveness is related to the family's use of leisure time" (p. 424). Shared leisure experiences emphasize the uniqueness of families, thus yielding attachments and bonding in family relationships. Many qualities of leisure, including perceived freedom, intrinsic reward, happiness, pleasure, humor, and playfulness (Russell, 1996), add an enjoyable or positive connotation to shared experiences in the context of family leisure. These add to the ability of such unique shared understandings to play a strengthening and cohesive role in the family. The collective interest and identity developed through family leisure activities not only strengthens attachments of system members, but continually offers new sources for increased family cohesion and bonding.

In terms of adaptability, Orthner and Mancini (1991) stated that "leisure experiences foster system adaptation to new inputs" (p. 297). Family leisure input can provide new opportunities for adaptation and interaction within the family system, as well as within the family's environment. The nature of many leisure activities is somewhat unpredictable; such activities could be challenging and could contain an element of risk. Such qualities foster the development of family skills in adaptability and flexibility that can be learned, practiced, and mastered in a less threatening, often enjoyable, leisure setting. These skills can prepare families to adapt to and cope with other challenging situations in their constantly changing environment.

Finally, the interactive nature of family leisure also provides a critical mechanism for developing and strengthening necessary family communication skills. Communication between family members in a leisure context is often less threatening and demanding and more open and relaxed than in other family contexts. Research indicates that joint leisure is highly correlated with positive communication (Orthner, 1976; Presvelou, 1971). Overall, the literature indicates that family leisure plays an integral role in family cohesion, adaptability, and communication, which supports Orthner and Mancini's (1991) statement that "overall, a systems theory perspective offers a useful window into the family and leisure relationship" (p. 297).

Critique of family leisure research. Many studies that have

examined family leisure have been descriptive in nature and have lacked specific theoretical grounding. Scholars have consistently agreed that "theory has been undervalued and underused by researchers" (Holman & Epperson, 1989, p. 291) in family leisure research, and scholars have stated that "research that is descriptive and explanatory without being a clear stop to creating testable, theoretical propositions is of negligible value" (Holman & Epperson, 1989, p. 291). Family leisure scholars unanimously call for theoretically based research in the study of family leisure (Hawkes, 1991; Orthner & Mancini, 1990).

Another weakness in the literature is the generalizations made from married couples to families. A majority of the family leisure research demonstrating relationships between joint recreation and family satisfaction, interaction, and stability are based on inferences made from studies of married couples and assume that the effects of leisure involvement are the same for other family systems (Ahn, 1982; Hill, 1988; Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Orthner, 1975, 1976; Palisi, 1984; Presvelou, 1971; Smith et al., 1988). Although marital relationships are a major component in the family system, the perspectives of other family members should be explored. Shaw (1997) indicated that "almost no data exist" (p. 107) from other family members for addressing outcomes of family leisure.

A further criticism of the family leisure research is that leisure has typically been operationalized in a simplistic and inconsistent manner. Measurement has included any time spent together, as well as lists of activities placed into categories with no theoretical basis or working models upon which such designations are founded. Even simple theoretical models of leisure have proven to be useful by providing the necessary framework to strengthen measurement. Orthner's (1975, 1976) model depicting three leisure activity patterns for couples fit well with symbolic interaction theory, which provided a sufficient framework to establish an important group of studies in this area. Similarly, it is imperative to identify and test theoretical models of family leisure that could provide the basis for strengthening measurement, generating hypotheses, and interpreting results when examining family leisure.

Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning

Scholars often have theorized about the nature and meaning of leisure behavior for individuals. Kelly (1996, 1999) suggests a notion of continuity and change in leisure by explaining that there are two different styles, kinds, or patterns of activities that individuals pursue across the life course. One style is consistent, is relatively accessible, and persists throughout the life course, whereas the other suggests variety, is less accessible, and changes throughout the life course. Iso-Ahola (1984) indicates 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 states that an individual has a tendency to "seek both stability and change, structure and variety, and familiarity and novelty in one's leisure" (p. 98). In other words, individuals meet needs for both stability (security) and change (novelty) through leisure behavior.

This interplay between stability and change may play an even greater role when one goes beyond the individual to examine the needs of a family system. Such a balance is one of the underlying concepts of family systems theory, which suggests that families seek a dynamic state of homeostasis. Families

as a system have a need for stability in interactions, structure, and relationships, as well as a need for novelty in experience, input, and challenge. As with individuals, it can be argued that families also seek such a balance between stability and change through leisure behavior.

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, doing so in the context of family leisure. This model of family leisure fits well with family systems theory, particularly Olson's (1986) Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems. The model suggests that there are two general categories or patterns of family leisure (core and balance) that families use to meet needs of stability and change. Further, the model suggests that core family leisure patterns address a family's need for familiarity and stability by regularly providing predictable family leisure experiences that foster personal relatedness and feelings of family closeness. On the other hand, balance family leisure patterns 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, and to progress as a working unit. Thus, relatively equal amounts of both family leisure patterns will foster feelings of family cohesion and the ability of a family to be flexible and adapt to the challenges they face in today's society. Core and balance patterns are apparent when examining the nature of leisure activities engaged in by families as well as the context in which they occur.

Core family leisure patterns. These patterns are depicted in the common, everyday, low-cost, relatively accessible, and often home-based activities that many families do frequently. This includes activities such as watching television and videos together, playing board games, playing together in the yard, shooting baskets together in the driveway, gardening, or playing in the leaves once the pile has been raked together. Core activities often require little planning and resources and are quite spontaneous and informal. Core family leisure experiences can provide a consistent, safe, and often positive context in which family members can foster relationships. These common and spontaneous family activities are generally nonthreatening because of their regularity and familiar environment. They are considered to be play, "just for fun," or even a step removed from the workday world. It is in this context of leisure that family members can safely explore boundaries, clarify family roles and rules, and practice ways to enforce them. This is also the context in which family members often are consoled, rewarded, refreshed, and rejuvenated.

Theoretically, core family leisure activities would make up the majority of family leisure interaction, as they are relatively accessible. It could be argued that many core activities would include "socializing," in which coparticipants engage in regular conversation. Further, conversation is facilitated in a leisure context in which not only are daily happenings addressed, but also feelings and emotions can be comfortably expressed. Therefore, it is hypothesized that such regular interpersonal interaction based on shared leisure experience enhances the knowledge of coparticipants and thus fosters increased personal relatedness and feelings of family closeness and cohesion.

Balance family leisure patterns. On the other hand, balance patterns are depicted through activities that are generally less common and less frequent than core activities and that therefore provide novel experiences. They usually require greater investment of resources (e.g., time, effort, and money) and are usually not home based. Balance patterns would include activities such

as family vacations; most outdoor recreation (e.g., camping, fishing, boating); special events; and trips to a theme park, a sporting event, or the bowling alley. Balance activities often require substantial planning and are therefore less spontaneous and more formalized. As a result, it would be anticipated that these types of family activities occur less frequently. However, they would tend to be of longer duration than most core activities. They tend to be more "out of the ordinary" and usually include elements of unpredictability or novelty. Therefore, balance activities likely require that family members negotiate and adapt to new input, experiences, and challenges.

Although balance family leisure patterns also may provide a basis for continued cohesion, the nature of these types of activities tends to facilitate the development of adaptive skills and the ability to learn and change. Balance types of activities require families to be exposed to new and unexpected stimuli from the outside environment, which provides the input and challenge necessary for families to learn and progress as an evolving system. The adaptive skills that are developed and practiced in this context of family leisure may be readily transferred to other areas of family life.

It is important, however, to point out that although most family leisure activities tend to fall into one category or the other, here we are looking at the family leisure pattern and not just the specific activity. Iso-Ahola (1984) argued that stability (core) and novelty (balance) in leisure behavior can be pursued within or between leisure activities. For one family, a shared billiards game may be a part of the after-dinner routine and would therefore be considered a core pattern. For another family, planning to go to the bowling alley or a relative's house to play billiards may be quite out of the ordinary and would be considered a balance pattern. In other words, although the categories are identifiable and measurable, there is some ambiguity to the rules within specific families. In general, however, the core and balance constructs suggest two basic family leisure patterns that demonstrate different characteristics in order to meet needs of both stability and change, which in turn lead to different outcomes, including family cohesion and adaptability.

Hypothesis

The purpose of this study was to conduct a preliminary test of the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning. To do so, the theorized relationships between family leisure patterns and aspects of family functioning were examined. Specifically, it was hypothesized that core family leisure patterns address family needs for stability, facilitate the development of cohesive relationships, and are related to perceptions of family cohesion. On the other hand, it was hypothesized that balance family leisure patterns address family needs for change, facilitate the development of adaptive skills, and are related to perceptions of family adaptability. Further, it was hypothesized that for optimal functioning, families have a need for both family leisure patterns, and that therefore, the interaction between core and balance would be related to family cohesion and adaptability.

Methodology

Sample

Data were obtained through group administration of the instrument in three lower-division undergraduate health education courses at a large Midwestern university. Such a sample of stu-

Table 1
Descriptive Summary of Traditional Students Used in Study Sample ($n = 138$)

Variable	Frequency	%
Gender (female)	100	72.5
History of divorce	38	28.4
Racial minority	10	7.3

Note: 80% of sample was ≤ 20 years of age. Means (SD) for age and for family size were 19.55 years (1.10) and 4.67 members (1.15), respectively.

dents provides a different perspective of family behavior than the typical parent views found in the literature. Also, prior research with student samples has not examined perceptions of family functioning as a dependent measure, nor have studies addressed family activity patterns. Thus, a convenient sample was considered appropriate for this preliminary test of the model.

In an effort to address recall of the time frame referenced in the survey (i.e., "the year or two before you came to college"), data from nontraditional students were excluded. Nontraditional students ($n = 10$) composed 6.7% of the total sample, and their ages ranged from 23–50 years, with a mean of 33.8 years ($SD = 11.2$ years). They were predominantly female (70%) and White (70%), and 30% of students in the nontraditional group reported a family history of divorce.

Traditional students included in this study ($n = 138$) were predominantly female (73%) and White (93%) (see Table 1). Minority groups included Asian (1%), Hispanic (2%), and Black (4%). The age range of the study group was 18–22 years, with a mean of 19.6 years ($SD = 1.1$ years). Subjects with biological or adoptive parents who had experienced a divorce or separation at some time (current or past) made up 28% of the sample. Family size ranged from two to nine members, with a mean of 4.7 members ($SD = 1.2$). Although class standing was not asked, 61% of the subjects were aged 19 years or younger in an entry-level class, suggesting that most were freshmen or sophomores.

Instrumentation

The research survey included the 30-item Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale—FACES II (Olson et al., 1992), a 14-item core and balance Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP) developed for this study, and a series of sociodemographic questions. FACES II measures perceptions of family cohesion and adaptability based on Olsen's (1986) Circumplex Model. It asks respondents to indicate how frequently the 30 described behaviors occur in their family, using a scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*). The scale contains 16 cohesion items and 14 adaptability items. Cohesion and adaptability scores are calculated by means of a formula that adds and subtracts item scores for each dimension based on its positive or negative reference, thus providing a total perceived family cohesion and family adaptability score.

Scores on the cohesion scale range from 16 to 80, with national means (Olson et al., 1992) of 64.9 reported for adult parents ($SD = 8.4$) and 56.3 for adolescents ($SD = 9.2$). The adaptability scale scores range from 14 to 70, with national means of 49.9 reported for adult parents ($SD = 6.6$) and 45.4 for adolescents ($SD = 7.9$). In the current study, young adult scores were as follows: cohesion mean of 61.2 ($SD = 8.9$) and adaptability mean of 45.8 ($SD = 7.9$). In national samples, reported internal consistency alphas were .88 and .86 for cohesion and .78 and .79 for adaptability. In the current study, alphas for cohesion and adaptability scales were comparable, at .86 for co-

Table 2
Zero-Order Correlations Between Independent Variables

Variable	Variable								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender (female)	—	-.060	.047	-.045	.044	-.048	.063	.003	.051
2. Age		—	.094	.082	.092	.137	-.044	.017	-.093
3. Family size			—	-.038	.179*	.072	.029	-.003	-.037
4. History of divorce				—	.028	-.096	-.006	-.059	-.119
5. Racial minority					—	.028	-.077	-.096	-.065
6. Core index						—	.368**	.403**	.231**
7. Balance index							—	.387**	.264**
8. Cohesion								—	.705**
9. Adaptability									—

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

hesion and .79 for adaptability. Test-retest reliability for FACES II in a national sample with a 4- to 5-week time lapse between administrations was reported as .83 for cohesion and .80 for adaptability.

The FLAP measures involvement in family leisure activity patterns based on the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning. Respondents identify leisure activities done with family members across 14 activity categories. Six categories of family activities were representative of core family leisure patterns, including family dinners, home-based television and video watching, games, and yard activities. Eight categories of family activities were representative of balance family leisure patterns, including community-based events, outdoor activities, water-based activities, adventure activities, and tourism. An international panel of experts ($n = 8$) supported the content validity of the core and balance categories based on the theoretical model (Zabriskie, 2000). Each question root 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?") that follow each root. Frequency response options are *at least daily*, *at least weekly*, *at least monthly*, or *at least annually*. Duration variables offer options from *less than 1 hour* to *an entire day* (12 time options) for the core activities and from *less than 1 hour* to *3 or more weeks* (33 time options) for the balance activities. The difference in duration options was included to account for the possibility of multiday experiences (e.g., vacations) in which extended periods were spent in leisure activities with family members. Thus, duration variables were ordinally coded 1 (<1 hr) through 12 (*entire day*) for core variables and 1 (<1 hr) through 33 (>3 weeks) for balance activities.

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 six core categories to provide a core family leisure index and summing the eight balance categories to provide a balance family leisure index. Multiplicative indices were chosen over the use of either ordinally scaled frequency or duration variables because the interest in the present study was to determine whether overall involvement in core or balance activities is indicative of family functioning. The use of the frequency variable alone would underweight those activities that were done infrequently but for longer durations, and conversely the duration variable alone would overweight such activities. The opposite would be true for core activities, if only the frequency or duration variable were used. Frequency alone

would overweight core activities, whereas duration alone would underweight core activities. As a result, the product of core and balance activity indices was used to account for both frequency and duration of family leisure involvement given that the activities in the two theoretically identified domains have different patterns of participation.

Core family leisure index scores from this sample ranged from 2 to 78, with a mean score of 27.2 ($SD = 11.8$). Balance family leisure index scores ranged from 8 to 151, with a mean score of 58.8 ($SD = 29.1$). Significant ($p < .01$) test-retest correlations were reported (Zabriskie, 2000) for core ($r = .74$) and balance ($r = .78$) family leisure indices in a similar college student sample with a 5-week period between administrations.

A series of sociodemographic questions was also included in order to identify underlying characteristics of the sample. Items included gender, age, ethnicity, family size, and history of divorce or separation among the subjects' birth or adoptive parents. Age and family size were used in their existing state, whereas other variables were dummy coded as follows: (a) gender, 1 = female, 0 = male; (b) ethnicity, 1 = minority, 0 = majority; (c) history of divorce, 1 = there was a history of divorce, 0 = no history of divorce.

Analysis

Prior to combining results from the three classes, an analysis of variance was conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the dependent variables between class groups. No significant differences in cohesion, $F(2, 158) = 2.11$, $p = .13$, or in adaptability, $F(2, 158) = .70$, $p = .50$, were found, so all subjects were collapsed into one group. Pearson Product Moment zero-order correlations between variables were examined to check for multicollinearity (see Table 2). There were significant correlations indicated, but the magnitude of the correlation coefficients did not indicate multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Although no significant zero-order correlations were indicated between sociodemographic variables and the dependent variables, sociodemographic variables were used as controls in the multiple regression models. These control factors were included to examine the unique contributions of leisure variables on family functioning.

Two multiple regression analyses were conducted using a block entry method. Sociodemographic variables were entered first as a block, followed by variables of interest. To test for an interaction between core and balance family leisure patterns, an interaction term was created from the product of the core and balance indices. Because multicollinearity can be a problem in

Table 3
Summary of Blocked Regression Equations for Variables Predicting Cohesion and Adaptability

Variable	B	SE B	β
Cohesion ($n = 130$)			
Block 1 $R^2 = .01$			
Gender (female)	0.11	1.76	.01
Age	0.47	0.73	.06
Family size	0.03	0.73	.01
History of divorce	-1.34	1.78	-.07
Racial minority	-1.46	3.17	-.04
Block 2 $\Delta R^2 = .21$ ($ps < .01$)			
Gender (female)	0.80	1.63	.04
Age	0.19	0.67	.02
Family size	-0.40	0.67	-.05
History of divorce	-0.96	1.61	-.05
Racial minority	-1.89	2.87	-.05
Core	0.27	0.07	.36**
Balance	0.06	0.03	.20*
Core \times Balance	0.01	0.01	-.16
Adaptability ($n = 131$)			
Block 1 $R^2 = .03$			
Gender (female)	0.71	1.55	.04
Age	-0.59	0.65	-.08
Family size	-0.48	0.64	-.07
History of divorce	-1.94	1.54	-.11
Racial minority	-0.25	2.80	-.01
Block 2 $\Delta R^2 = .11$ ($ps < .05$)			
Gender (female)	1.28	1.53	.07
Age	-0.66	0.63	-.09
Family size	-0.83	0.63	-.12
History of divorce	-1.78	1.49	-.11
Racial minority	-0.50	2.70	-.02
Core	0.13	0.06	.20*
Balance	0.05	0.03	.19*
Core \times Balance	0.01	0.01	-.15

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

equations in which one variable is a mathematical derivative of another variable (Aiken & West, 1991), core and balance indices were centered ($x_i - \text{mean}$) prior to the creation of their cross-product (core \times balance). Aiken and West noted that this process minimizes problems of multicollinearity. Cohesion and adaptability were the dependent variables in the two regression equations.

Findings

Overall, findings indicated that both analyses found significant relationships between the family leisure variables and aspects of family functioning; however, neither interaction term was found to be a significant predictor of family functioning (Table 3). In addition, sociodemographic variables were not significant predictors of aspects of family functioning in either of the regression models.

In the first regression analysis, family cohesion was regressed on the independent variables including the interaction term (see Table 3). The first block (sociodemographic variables alone) explained less than 1% of the variance in family cohesion and was not significant ($R^2 < .01$, $F(5, 125) = 0.22$, $p = .95$). Overall, the model, including the sociodemographic block and the research variables (including interaction term), explained a small but significant portion of the variance in family cohesion ($R^2 = .22$, $F(8, 122) = 4.24$, $p = .01$). Although the interaction term was not found to be a significant predictor of family co-

hesion, significant relationships were indicated for both core leisure patterns ($\beta = .36$, $p < .01$) and balance leisure patterns ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$).

In the multiple regression analysis, family adaptability was regressed on the independent variables (see Table 3). Again, no significant regression coefficient was found with any of the sociodemographic variables, and the block of variables explained little variance ($R^2 = .03$, $F(5, 126) = 0.72$, $p = .61$). However, the total model, including sociodemographic and research variables, explained a small but significant portion of the variance in family adaptability ($R^2 = .14$, $F(8, 123) = 2.39$, $p = .05$), although the interaction of core and balance was not a significant predictor ($\beta = -.15$, $t = -1.68$, $p < .10$). As was the case with family cohesion, significant relationships were found for both core leisure patterns ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$) and balance leisure patterns ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$) in explaining family adaptability.

Although core family leisure involvement was a significant predictor of family adaptability in this model, findings suggest that the sociodemographic variables suppressed extraneous variance and thus enhanced the regression coefficient of core family leisure patterns. That is, when different groups of sociodemographic variables were included in regression equations, the standardized regression coefficient associated with core family leisure patterns ranged from .16 ($p < .09$) to .20 ($p < .05$). In contrast, the balance standardized regression coefficient ranged from .19 ($p < .05$) to .20 ($p < .05$) in the presence of the same sociodemographic variables. Thus, whereas the standardized regression coefficient associated with core family leisure varied by as much as 25%, the standardized regression coefficient associated with balance family leisure varied by only about 5.5%. These findings indicate that although none of the sociodemographic variables demonstrated significant univariate or multivariate correlation coefficients, they did influence the relationship of core family leisure patterns to adaptability more so than the relationship of balance family leisure patterns to adaptability in this sample. In other words, when considering the suppressive effects of the sociodemographic variables, balance patterns were a more consistent predictor of family adaptability than core patterns.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to provide a preliminary test of a model of family leisure functioning by examining the contributions of core and balance family leisure patterns to aspects of family functioning. Specifically, it was hypothesized that core family leisure patterns would be associated with family cohesion, whereas balance family leisure patterns would be associated with family adaptability. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the interaction between the core and balance patterns would be related to both aspects of family functioning.

Regarding the first hypothesis, findings indicated that both core and balance family leisure patterns were significantly related to family cohesion. As expected, core patterns were related to family cohesion more strongly ($\beta = .36$) than were balance patterns ($\beta = .20$). Unexpectedly, findings indicated that both the core and balance family leisure patterns were significantly related to family adaptability in similar ways (core: $\beta = .20$, $p < .05$; balance: $\beta = .19$, $p < .05$). Overall, the findings support those of previous research (Hawkes, 1991; Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1990) that report positive relationships between family leisure patterns and aspects of family func-

tioning. Further, the findings suggest that not only does what families do together in leisure relate to members' perceptions of family cohesiveness and adaptability, but also that different leisure patterns are related to these perceptions in different ways. In other words, findings from this select group of young adults reporting on perceptions of family functioning appear to support the primary notions hypothesized by the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning. Specifically, core family leisure patterns tend to be more strongly related to perceptions of family cohesion. Balance patterns, as well as core patterns, tend to be related to perceptions of adaptability.

Other findings reported here suggest that according to the young adults in this sample, relatively equal involvement in both core and balance family leisure patterns is not associated with perceptions of family functioning. However, both interaction terms approached significance in the equations (cohesion: $\beta = -.16, p = .07$; balance: $\beta = -.15, p = .10$). Future research with varied family samples should continue to pay attention to potential interaction between core and balance patterns in understanding family leisure.

Findings also clearly indicated that family leisure patterns explained more variance in family cohesion than in adaptability. In particular, core patterns played a role in perceptions of family closeness for this young adult sample. Although many family social service and treatment programs do not specifically recognize the role of leisure in family functioning, those that do generally focus on balance types of activities. These activities are those that are out of the ordinary and that are used in an effort to challenge family members and promote growth (Clapp & Rudolph, 1993; Gass, 1993; Gillis & Gass, 1993; Kugath, 1997; Pommier & Witt, 1995). Such interventions are important and often are successful, yet these findings suggest that involvement in common, home-based, relatively accessible activities with family members on a regular basis also may be an effective way of enhancing at least one's perceptions of family functioning.

Findings addressing balance patterns did indicate a statistically significant relationship with family adaptability as predicted, but this relationship accounted for less variance than that in the cohesion model. Furthermore, family core patterns were a statistically significant predictor in the equation, which was an unanticipated finding. This finding challenges the theoretical relationship described in the family leisure model between balance family leisure patterns and perceptions of the ability for families to change, modify, and adapt. However, one must recognize the preliminary nature of this study as well as the limitations of the use of a college student sample. It is difficult to get an accurate picture of a family system from reports by only one member of that system. Memory and recollection of family leisure involvement over an extended time is also of concern.

Implications

Overall, findings from this study indicate that there is a relationship between family leisure involvement and aspects of family functioning. Specifically, findings support the theoretical link between core and balance family leisure patterns and Olson's (1986) model. They also provide preliminary evidence supporting the use of the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning in examining the nature of the family leisure relationship. The notion of these family leisure patterns and their relationship with a family systems theory appears to be "a clear

stop to creating testable, theoretical propositions" (Holman & Epperson, 1989, p. 291), and it indicates the potential for new theoretical grounding in family leisure research.

Implications to Research

This study, however, represents only a beginning step in examining this theoretical relationship. One must keep in mind that correlational techniques were utilized to explore theoretical relationships; therefore, interpretations cannot assume causality. Furthermore, although examining the perception of family members other than those in the marital dyad adds valuable insight to the family leisure literature, these data remain the perceptions of individuals. Data that include multiple perspectives (e.g., family-level measurement) of current family leisure patterns will be instrumental in further clarifying this relationship. Additional refinement of the FLAP is imperative as well. Although test-retest reliability and content validity studies of the instrument have been conducted, known group studies with different samples (e.g., families in treatment) also should be conducted to further examine construct validity. Instruments besides FACES II that measure constructs similar to family cohesion and adaptability also might provide greater confidence in these findings. As instruments and relationships are refined, it will become imperative to develop family leisure programming based on empirically supported models so that experimental methodologies can be employed to examine causality and directionality of the family leisure relationship.

Implications to Practice

There are useful implications for practitioners based on current findings. The first and foremost is the recognition of family leisure involvement as a valuable component of family life. Besides family crisis, shared leisure may be one of the few experiences that bring family members together for any significant amount of time today. Although shared leisure activities are not a panacea for all family problems, family leisure affects the quality of family life and may be particularly helpful in facilitating family cohesion and adaptability. The Core and Balance Model also suggests that different patterns of family leisure may contribute to perceptions about a family's need for both stability and change. Therefore, practitioners should be aware of the nature of such family activities in terms of assessment and program provision.

As noted earlier, the majority of programs that provide leisure programming for families tend to focus on providing balance types of activities—such as challenge course events, group initiatives, and outdoor adventure activities—that are out of the ordinary and that appear to have an immediate impact. Although such interventions often are successful at least in the short term, these findings indicate that core family leisure patterns may be even more important to family functioning, especially concerning perceptions of family cohesion. We recommend that practitioners teach families the skills needed to be involved in common home-based activities together on a regular basis and that practitioners identify the diversity of such activities that are possible. These skills will help families create regular family leisure traditions from activities as simple as board games, card games, or yard activities. In this way stable patterns of quality interaction among family members are created that can foster communication, system identity, and interpersonal relationships.

Future implications for this line of study include the possibility of using an instrument such as the FLAP for both diag-

nostic and prescriptive purposes. If the relationships theorized in the model continue to hold true, the FLAP could be used as a nonthreatening leisure activity questionnaire to provide valuable information about other aspects of family functioning. Such a usable instrument with acceptable psychometric properties could be beneficial for various family service programs, including social service departments, parks and recreation departments, and both private and nonprofit family treatment facilities. In addition, the instrument would provide prescriptive direction to leisure programming by identifying particular family leisure patterns that could be utilized to address specific family needs.

Other implications can be identified for specific types of family services. For example, research has consistently indicated that successful adoptive families with special-needs children demonstrate higher levels of family cohesion and adaptability than Olson's (1986) reported norms (e.g., Groze, 1996; Groze & Rosenthal, 1991; Hoopes, Aleander, Silver, Ober, & Kirby, 1997). Furthermore, Groze and Rosenthal reported that "recreation focused around the family was highly valued in adoptive families" (p. 476). Therefore, the FLAP could be useful in the screening of prospective adoptive parents considering the adoptions of children with special needs. Leisure education components could be included in preplacement programs that teach family leisure skills related to core and balance leisure patterns. Such programs might increase the likelihood of successful adoptive family systems.

Although the possible implications for this line of study are quite broad, current findings offer only preliminary support of the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning. Researchers must continue to examine this model in terms of its theoretical and practical implications. The model does provide a viable theoretical argument with the necessary framework to further test and understand the nature of the family leisure relationship. The constructs represented in the model, along with the related instrument, may provide valuable direction in future research, as well as useful implications for practitioners who work with families.

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