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Canadian Family Leisure, Family Functioning, and Family Satisfaction: A Family Perspective

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Canadian Family Leisure, Family Functioning, and Family Satisfaction:
A Family Perspective

Shaun C. Nua

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

Canadian Family Leisure, Family Functioning, and Family Satisfaction: A Family Perspective

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The purpose of this study was to further examine the relationship between family leisure variables and the dependent variables of family functioning and satisfaction with family life among a broad, national sample of Canadian families using the Core and Balance framework. Specifically, this study examined how both family leisure involvement (core and balance) and family leisure satisfaction contributed to the explanation of variance in family functioning and satisfaction with family life. Because the data were nested in families, this study accounted for family-level variance by incorporating mixed modeling. The sample consisted of 943 families across Canada including one parent and one child between the ages of 11 and 16 ($n = 1886$). Findings added to previous Canadian family leisure studies by reporting empirical relationships between family leisure variables and outcome variables and doing so from a broad national sample. Findings were also consistent with trends in other countries reporting satisfaction with core family leisure involvement as the single strongest predictor of both family functioning and satisfaction with family life among Canadian families. Furthermore, while core family leisure satisfaction was the driving force in the explanation of variance in family satisfaction, findings suggest there must be participation in both core and balance family leisure. Additional implications for Canadian families, scholars, professionals, and policy makers are discussed.

Keywords: Canadian families, family functioning, family leisure, family satisfaction

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
Canadian Family Leisure, Family Functioning, and Family Satisfaction: A Family Perspective	
Introduction	1
Review of Literature	3
Methods	13
Findings	19
Discussion and Implications	21
References	31

List of Tables

Tables

1. Canadian Family Descriptive Statistics.....	40
2. Independent Variables Estimating Variance in Family Functioning	41
3. Independent Variables Estimating Variance in Satisfaction with Family Life	42

Canadian Family Leisure, Family Functioning, and Family Satisfaction:
A Family Perspective

Canada is home to over 200 different ethnicities, two official languages, and over 600 First Nations communities, making it one of the most multicultural and religiously diverse countries in the world (McLuckie, Allan, & Ungar, 2013). Bordering three oceans, the vast terrain of Canada provides a diverse assortment of settings for families to inhabit, from bustling metropolitan cities to sparsely populated villages, and everything in between (Government of Canada, 2012). The immigrant population in Canada now outnumbers the natural fertility rate for population growth. With such a dynamic and diverse society, numerous influences now affect the way Canadians find meaning and form personal and family values (Rennick, 2013).

Studies have shown Canadians view families as essential and value the family for its personal and social benefits (Schlesinger, 2007). The stability of the Canadian family, however, is deteriorating rapidly (Conway, 2003). Modification of the family unit has become a defining characteristic of families in the twenty-first century (MacIntosh, Reissing, & Andruff, 2010; Milan, 2000). Recommendations for strengthening the Canadian family and boosting both family functioning and satisfaction within the family unit have been sought after and publicly proposed, such as structuring programs and services that respond to family need, focusing on the family as a whole instead of parents and children separately, and increasing involvement in the community and between families (The Alberta Premier's Council in Support of Families, 1993). Decades of studies on family leisure throughout the world have suggested leisure with family members is one such solution with potential unifying and stabilizing effects (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Poff, Zabriskie, & Townsend, 2010; Witt & Goodale, 1981; Zabriskie & Kay, 2013).

A number of significant Canadian leisure studies using specific subgroups of Canadian families have shed light on numerous family leisure issues. Shaw and Dawson (2001) reported enhanced benefits of increased family cohesion, interaction, communication, and the learning of new skills when parents intentionally and deliberately planned and facilitated activities for their families. Shaw (2001, 2008, 2010) also found changing beliefs and a higher valuation of family leisure, as well as greater pressures and constraints associated with family leisure balance due to a growing workload for parents, and, in particular, mothers. Other studies, too, have explored the limitations families in Canada experience due to geography, time stress, and a changing family structure (Kowalski, Grybovych, Lankford, & Neal, 2012; Smale, 2010). The leisure practices of specific ethnic groups, genders, and subgroups within the family have been investigated in great detail, including South Asian teens and young adults (Tirone & Pedlar, 2000), families living with dementia or a family member in an institutional care setting (Cassolato et al., 2010; Dupuis & Pedlar, 1995), families with a person with a disability (Brown, Anand, Fung, Isaacs, & Baum, 2003), mothers and daughters, (Shannon & Shaw, 2008), farm women (Trussell & Shaw, 2007), the experiences of different genders related to family leisure (Shaw, 2001), and several more.

The level of national comprehensiveness in family leisure research has been minimal in the last decade, whereas the diversification of the family, both in structure and in ethnicity, has been expanding. While the rich, comprehensive findings from qualitative studies have provided clarity and in-depth understanding of unique family leisure topics, they inherently lack the broader generalizability offered by studies examining a large national sample. In order to influence social policy and the provision of family leisure services in Canada there appears to be a need for further examination of the family leisure relationship among a large national sample

of families. Results from such a study have the potential to add further support to previous findings among Canadian samples (Shannon & Shaw, 2008; Shaw, 2010; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Trussell & Shaw, 2007) and provide additional insight into the relationship between family leisure involvement, family functioning, and satisfaction with family life among modern Canadian families. The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning offers a sound framework from which to examine family leisure variables and has been successfully used among a variety of large family samples in different countries (Aslan, 2009; Buswell, Zabriskie, Lundberg, & Hawkins, 2012; Poff et al., 2010; Zabriskie & Kay, 2013). With lasting marriages and family units on the decline, an increasing number of women in the workplace (Shaw, 2001), intensifying family stress (Daly, 1996), and several other leisure constraints, a study of Canadian family leisure demands closer attention to see if previous findings from this framework are supported in the nation of Canada. Findings could highlight the need for Canada to promote accessibility to different types of family leisure, aid policy makers in implementing procedures that minimize constraints, and give empirical direction to parents wanting to influence their family life through leisure. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to further examine the relationship between family leisure variables, family functioning, and family satisfaction among a large national sample of families across Canada.

Review of Literature

The Modern Canadian Family

Family research around the globe over the past decade has investigated the rapidly changing composition, structure, and meaning of family. Many of these changes have been said to have weakened the family unit and had a ripple effect on other social programs and societal concerns. This holds true for Canadian families, and 40% of Canadians strongly agree that “families are in crisis” (Milan, 2000, p. 5). Despite this, Canadians remain fiercely loyal to the

idea of families and believe in the power of this institution. They regard the family as “a key source of love, support, stability, happiness and companionship, and as fundamental to optimum community and national life” (Bibby, 2004, p. 9).

Nearly twenty years ago, opinion polls showed that the majority of Canadians felt their own families were stable, happy, and satisfying (Reid, 1994; Milan, 2000). The last twenty years, however, have brought about some staggering challenges for Canadian families, the most common of which undermine the stability, permanence, and organization of the family unit (Statistics Canada, 2011). Marriage in Canada is facing crisis as nearly one in two marriages may well end in divorce (Statistics Canada, 2011). Tens of thousands of Canadian children suffer through a marriage breakdown annually (Conway, 2003). Because of this, more and more Canadians refuse to take the emotional risk of marriage. Additionally, couples opting to have children are declining substantially. For instance, the province of Quebec historically had high fertility rates, but by the mid-1990s exhibited one of the lowest fertility rates ever recorded in human society (Barrington-Leigh, 2011; Caldwell & Fournier, 1987). The overall country’s fertility rate is dangerously below replacement levels of 2.1, with only 1.59 children born per woman. Possible explanations for this include the escalating cost of raising children in a struggling economy, and more educated women delaying or avoiding child-bearing if it will damage their economic future and opportunities (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

In addition to crises that weaken the family unit, the family framework itself is transitioning and becoming more complex. Same-sex marriage is legal nationwide and the diverse ways family as an institution is shaped is increasing (MacIntosh et al., 2010). Recent years have brought greater individualism and more choice, giving rise to new living arrangements. The ethnic composition of Canada’s families is also changing rapidly. As

mentioned earlier, substantially declining fertility rates have led to a reduction in the natural increase of the population. Population growth, however, has remained constant for the last decade as growth has been compensated by an increase in immigration to Canada (Fougère, Harvey, Mercenier, & Mérette, 2009). Eighteen percent of the people living in Canada were born elsewhere. Canada admits between 220,000 and 240,000 new immigrants each year, and with them come new ideas, new religions, new cultures, and new family values. The cultural landscape of Canada is constantly changing as the country welcomes those who they hope will rejuvenate an aging society, provide both skilled and unskilled labor, and help to ensure present and future competitiveness in the global economy (Beiser, 2005).

Increased diversity among families by way of cultural background and family composition, as well as the decline of the “traditional family” (described as a family that includes a married husband and wife and one or more children) (Update on Families, 2003) has brought about a reconceptualization of the family and a call for new family literature which takes into account of diversity and modification of the family unit (Luxton, 2005; Shaw, 2010). These changes affect family forms, structures, living arrangements, economic variables, and all other variables of family life, including family leisure.

Canadian Family Leisure

Family leisure research in North America has suggested that the average Canadian spends most of his or her free time at home or with family members away from home. This finding substantiates the notion that family life is important to Canadians, and is reflected through their leisure practices (Shaw, 2001). Additionally, new ideas about parenting in the 21st century have led to higher valuation of the instrumental aspects of leisure and increased importance placed on children’s’ leisure and on family activities (Shaw, 2010). The geography of Canada offers

numerous leisure and recreation options, however, finding time, finding activities, and organizing joint family leisure activities seem to be leading constraints for families (Shaw, 2010). The high regard for, but low access to and consumption of family leisure must be considered when examining it and its relationship to other family variables, especially since previous Canadian leisure studies suggest many residents may depend on recreational activities and programs in their individual communities in order to socially network, build relationships, and experience feelings of belonging (Kowalski et al., 2012).

Canada is the second largest country in the world by land mass, and thousands of families live in very sparsely populated areas (McLuckie et al., 2013). Leisure research in the Northwest Territories of Canada suggested that families in geographically remote and isolated locations experience leisure constraints including scarcity or absence of recreational areas and facilities, a need for a wider array of leisure activities, and difficulty prioritizing and balancing work, leisure, and personal maintenance (Kowalski et al., 2012). Even for those not bound by constraints of remote location, participation in leisure activities is dropping. Two-thirds of Canada's 35 million people live within 100 miles of the United States border, and millions more settle near large, metropolitan cities. Studies have found these residents are spending less time on social leisure activities, that attendance at arts and cultural performances have dropped, and that visits to National Parks and historic sites are rapidly decreasing, just to name a few (Smale, 2010). Watching television has become the leading leisure activity in the nation (Shaw, 2010). While any leisure is better than no leisure, unintentional and passive activities such as television watching do not often carry the same advantages as those where promotion of leisure is deliberate (Buswell et al., 2012; Harrington, 2005).

Because family leisure provides opportunities for families to develop fundamental attributes to improve the quality of life, stable and successful family relationships between husband and wife and between parents and children often result (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Purposeful family interaction helps foster meaningful relationships, assists in developing skills and competencies, and influences all aspects of the family environment (Ward & Zabriskie, 2011). Research across cultures suggests increasing these skills through family leisure participation can correspondingly assist family functioning, which includes communication, cohesion, and adaptability (Aslan, 2009; Poff et al., 2010).

Family Leisure and Family Functioning

Family Systems theory is a well-known and a widely accepted framework developed for the main purpose of understanding family behaviors. This framework suggests that the family as a whole affects each individual within the family, while each individual can also affect the family as a whole (White & Klein, 2008). Zabriskie and McCormick (2001) summarize family systems theory by stating it “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” (p. 281).

Olson and DeFrain (1997) have attempted to capture the dynamics of family systems in the Family Circumplex Model. Three main dimensions are embodied in the Family Circumplex Model: (a) cohesion, (b) adaptability, and (c) communication. Cohesion is based on dimensions of emotional bonding and closeness, while adaptability is based on the capacity to adjust to changes in the family environment (Olson, 2000). Communication, allows the family to move through levels of cohesion and adaptability. The Circumplex Model states that family

functioning is paramount when families take part in activities which permit them to achieve the proper balance between cohesive and adaptive experiences together (Olson & DeFrain, 1997).

Consistent findings of positive relationships between improved family functioning and quality time spent together in family leisure have been found (Baldwin, Ellis, & Baldwin, 1999; Holman & Epperson, 1984; Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Family leisure includes leisure activities and recreation that require participation and interaction from family members together. It is constructed of both leisure involvement (frequency and duration), and leisure satisfaction (quality). This construct of leisure satisfaction is, in fact, often a better predictor of family functioning than involvement alone (Hodge, Zabriskie, & Poff, 2012; Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006).

Numerous scholars have become mindful of the family leisure construct and thorough examination of relationships between families who have joint, purposive leisure, and their associations to family outcomes have been studied in the past decade (Poff et al., 2010; Buswell et al., 2012; Hodge et al., 2012; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). When family leisure is approached intentionally, referred to as *purposive leisure* (Shaw & Dawson, 2001), increased family cohesion, interaction, communication, and the learning of new skills and values is much more likely. Shaw and Dawson (2001) also found that it was often with a “sense of urgency” (p. 224) that parents try to spend time together with children participating in family activities before reaching adolescence, and when parents “consciously and deliberately” (p. 223) plan and facilitate family leisure activities in order to attain these goals, family leisure can be used to enhance various aspects of family functioning. Recreational activities tend to facilitate outcomes of both adaptability and cohesion essential to family functioning (Olsen, 2000) because the family system is compelled to interact, often very closely, during leisure (Zabriskie &

McCormick, 2001). Petrick and Durko (2013) reported that parents value the role they believe family leisure plays with respect to child development and socialization. Joint participation in leisure activities including parents and children has also been related to positive communication, increased satisfaction with family life, and loyalty toward family members (Agate, Zabriskie, Agate, & Poff, 2009; Shaw, 2008). The Core and Balance model has been used to consistently report similar relationships between family leisure and various family constructs (Poff et al., 2010) and offers a sound framework from which to examine family leisure, family functioning, and family satisfaction among Canadian families.

Core and Balance

In order to further examine the link between family leisure involvement and family functioning, Zabriskie and McCormick (2001) constructed the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning. Grounded in family systems theory, the model implies a direct relationship between family leisure and aspects of family functioning, namely cohesion and adaptability (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). It classifies leisure in two categories that meet the needs for stability and change: core (common) and balance (novel) family leisure. Utilizing this framework, scholars consistently report direct links between family leisure involvement and family cohesion, adaptability and overall family functioning (Dodd, Zabriskie, Widmer, & Eggett, 2009; Hornberger, Zabriskie, & Freeman, 2010).

Core activities are “common, everyday, low-cost, relatively accessible, and often home-based activities” that many families do frequently (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001, p. 283). Some examples of core activities are going on family walks, gardening, and playing board games. These core family activities are known to be related to family cohesion and provide opportunity for family members to deepen and build relationships in a nonthreatening

environment. Balance activities, on the other hand, are depicted through activities that are “generally less common and less frequent than core activities and, therefore, provide novel experiences” (p. 283). Some examples of balance types of activities are family vacations, special events, camping out, theme parks or other activities that often require more resources or money and thorough planning. These tend to meet the need for challenge and change as they provide avenues for the family to grow, be challenged, and develop as a functioning system (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Zabriskie & McCormick suggest that balance activities are theoretically linked to adaptability. They provide families with the skills to cope with change and be flexible when needed. Scholars have found that families who generally participate in both core and balance family leisure activities tend to have higher levels of family functioning than those who participate in high or low amounts of either one (Freeman & Zabriskie, 2003).

The Core and Balance Model appears to offer a sound theoretical framework from which to examine family leisure involvement. It has also been used to evaluate family leisure satisfaction and its relationships to outcome variables of both family functioning and satisfaction with family life. The use of such a model is likely to offer both the framework necessary to examine a large sample of diverse Canadian families and the potential to provide results with both comparative and predictive value.

Family Leisure Satisfaction and Satisfaction with Family Life

The potentially contradictory relationship between family leisure and its expected benefits and outcomes should also be considered. Orthner (1985) found that family leisure can sometimes be a source of conflict among family members. Subsequently, Shaw (2001) found that for some Canadian families, leisure satisfaction is lower for parents than for children, since parents have the added stress of planning and organizing and making sure activities are

purposive (Trussell & Shaw, 2007; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Family leisure is becoming more “work-like” for parents (Shaw, 2010), and potential benefits of shared activities are not always easily attainable. For instance, parents with young children often face constraints or difficulties associated with finding, organizing and participating in joint family leisure activities (Shaw, 2001). On the other hand, studies of family leisure have consistently identified positive relationships between quality time spent together in family leisure and improved family functioning (Baldwin et al., 1999; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal 1999; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Activities that provide a break from routine obligations and daily career stressors help increase relationship satisfaction as well as overall life satisfaction levels (Petrick & Durko, 2013). Family leisure additionally provides an outlet to perpetuate family bonding and life-long memories (Shaw, Havitz, & Delemere, 2008).

One way scholars have attempted to determine the extent to which individual’s perceptions of family leisure contribute to family functioning is by including the variable of satisfaction with family leisure in order to address these inconsistencies. Satisfaction goes beyond simply accounting for the amount of time and involvement families spend in leisure activities. Generally, the *importance* people attach to their leisure and culture engagements and the satisfaction they derive from them have shown to be stronger predictors of quality of life than behavioral measures based on *participation* in activities alone (Agate et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2006; Smale, 2010). Measures of the perceived outcomes from participation (e.g., satisfaction, derived benefits, met needs) address this conflict between family leisure and its expected benefits and outcomes by accounting for individual value judgments related to family leisure involvement, whether negative, positive, or otherwise (Buswell et al., 2012), and does so independent of the influences of participation.

In their study of father involvement in family leisure, Buswell et al. (2012) found satisfaction with family involvement in everyday, core family leisure activities to be a stronger predictor of family functioning scores than the amount of involvement when considering various perspectives and aspects of family functioning:

“Rather than the occasional expensive family vacation alone, the satisfaction with regularly occurring home-based family activities such as eating dinner together, participating in hobbies, informal sports and yard activities together, watching television together, or playing games together was the single strongest predictor of all aspects of family functioning, particularly from the youth perspective.” (p. 186)

Such findings add considerable insight that go beyond participation levels only and suggest family leisure satisfaction should certainly be included in future research examining family leisure functioning.

Additionally, scholars have found a positive relationship between family leisure satisfaction and another more global outcome variable, satisfaction with family life (Agate et al., 2009; Williamson, Zabriskie, Fellingham, Barney, & Ward, under review). Neal et al. (1999) were among the first to research this phenomena and concluded that overall life satisfaction was directly influenced by leisure satisfaction. An indication of individual family member's satisfaction is important for accounting for the variation related to the stress and conflict that numerous Canadian families face and Canadian leisure studies have addressed previously (Shaw, 1997, 2001, 2008, 2010; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Several studies using the Core and Balance framework have pointed to core leisure satisfaction (satisfaction with everyday, routine, activities) as the greatest contributor to all aspects of family and marital functioning (cohesion, adaptability, and overall family functioning) and satisfaction with family life (Agate et al., 2009;

Hodge et al., 2012). Previous Canadian leisure studies have observed smaller samples of parents emphasizing the need for inexpensive and easily accessible facilities for casual or informal participation. They also found families seemed to prefer outdoor and physically active shared pursuits such as biking and hiking together, and participating at community recreation facilities (Shaw, 2001). Whether or not these same values exist for Canadian families across the nation, or if participation in these types of family leisure are related to family satisfaction for a growing number of ethnically diverse families in this nation, is yet to be determined. This study will add support to previous Canadian leisure research as to the depth and breadth of the relationship between family leisure and other family satisfaction and functioning variables. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to further examine the contribution of family leisure variables (family leisure involvement and family leisure satisfaction) to family functioning and satisfaction with family life among a large, national sample of Canadian families.

Methods

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through an online survey sampling company called Survey Sampling International (SSI) that distributes online questionnaires to random participants recruited through their multi-source Internet panel of millions of households worldwide. Subjects were drawn from Canadian volunteers willing to participate in online research. The online questionnaire was distributed through SSI to Canadian families who had a child between the ages of 11 and 16, and two separate responses were required from each participating family, one from the parent and the other from the child. In an attempt to keep answers private, parents and children were asked to complete the questionnaire separately. Limitations due to online data collection and other self-

report data collection were understood, including poor memory, misunderstanding of the questions, and technological difficulties (Ward, Clark, Zabriskie, & Morris, 2012).

Sample

Data were collected from a national sample of families ($n = 943$) living in Canadian households containing at least one child (11 to 16 years of age). Families were defined as two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have a commitment to one another over time. The family is that climate that one comes home to and is the network of sharing and commitments that most accurately describes the family unit, regardless of blood, legal ties, adoption, or marriage (DeFrain & Asay, 2007, p.284).

The majority of parent respondents were white (90.3%) with minority represented by Asian (3.9%), Black (2.6%), Hispanic (1.3%), and Other (1.9%). The adolescent ethnic majority was also white (89.4%), with 4.5 % Asian, 2.8% Black, and 1.8% Other. The mean family size was 4.11 people with a reported range from 2 to 9 family members. The majority of respondents (57.5%) lived in Urban/Suburban areas (population > 50,000). Most of the respondent parents were female (71.5%) and ranged from 22 - 73 years with a mean age of 41.76 years ($SD = 7.00$). Youth respondents were a slight majority male (52.8%) and ranged from 11 to 16 years with a mean age of 13.17 years ($SD = 1.42$). Annual income ranged from less than \$10,000 to more than \$150,000 with a median category of \$50,000-\$59,000.

When compared with Canada's national population, ethnicity in the sample consisted of 90.3% white Canadians, compared to 83.5% of Canada's population. Asians, who represent 10.5% of the national population, were represented by only 4.5% of the sample. Blacks were most closely nationally represented with the national population being 2.3% and the study

population at 2.8% (Statistics Canada, 2011; United North America, 2013). Canada's average family size is 3.0, lower than the sample's 4.11 people per household (Statistics Canada, 2011) likely due to the study requirement of having at least one teenage child. Median family income for Canada is about \$63,000 annually (Statistics Canada, 2011), slightly higher than families in this sample. The current sample largely reflected the national population of Canada.

Instrumentation

Involvement in core and balance family leisure was measured using the Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP) (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). The embedded Family Leisure Satisfaction Scale (FLSS) measured satisfaction with current involvement in each of the family leisure activity categories. Overall family functioning, including family member's perspectives on cohesion and adaptability was measured using the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES II) (Olson et al., 1992). Overall family satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Family Life Scale (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003; Zabriskie & Ward, 2013). Finally, demographic variables were collected in order to best describe the sample.

Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP). The FLAP is a 16-item activity inventory measuring involvement in family leisure activities as they are categorized within the Core and Balance framework (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Respondents identified leisure activities done together with family members across 16 activity categories. Eight categories were representative of core family leisure (e.g., family dinners, routine activities, games, and religious activities), and eight categories were representative of balance family leisure (community-based events and outdoor activities). Specific activities were provided for each category to clarify the distinctions between them. Each of the questions had three parts: (a) a dichotomous indicator of participation in the particular category (yes/no); (b) an ordinal indicator of frequency asking

approximately how often participation occurs (*daily, weekly, monthly, annually*); and (c) an ordinal indicator of duration asking about how long participation lasts each time (*less than one hour, up to three weeks, or more*). Family leisure involvement scores were calculated by multiplying each item's frequency and duration and then summing the ordinal index scores of questions 1 to 8 for core and questions 9 to 16 for balance. Parent and youth samples have demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties including construct validity and test-retest reliability for core ($\alpha = .74$), balance ($\alpha = .78$), and total family leisure involvement ($\alpha = .78$) (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001).

Family Leisure Satisfaction Scale (FLSS). The FLSS is embedded into the FLAP and measured satisfaction with current involvement, or lack of involvement, in each of the family leisure categories. Responses were indicated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Scores were calculated by summing core and balance family leisure satisfaction items. Acceptable psychometric properties have been reported including internal consistencies of $\alpha = .90$ from both parents and youth (Agate et al., 2009).

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales II (FACES II). Elements of family functioning were measured using the FACES II, a 30-item scale measuring perceptions of family cohesion and family adaptability based on Olson's Circumplex Model (Olson, 1986). The scale (Olson et al., 1992) uses a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("almost never") to 5 ("almost always") to measure cohesion (16 items) and family adaptability (14 items). After calculating total cohesion and adaptability scores, linear scoring interpretation procedures were used to obtain an indicator of overall family functioning. Acceptable psychometric properties have been reported for this instrument (Olson et al., 1992). Articles featuring the Core and Balance framework have consistently reported adequate Cronbach's alpha coefficients for

parents ranging from $\alpha = .76$ to $\alpha = .89$ for cohesion (Hornberger et al., 2010), and $\alpha = .71$ to $\alpha = .83$ for adaptability (Smith, Freeman, & Zabriskie, 2009; Townsend & Zabriskie, 2010).

Cronbach's alpha for youth have also been consistently reported in the acceptable ranges, from $\alpha = .72$ to $\alpha = .88$ for cohesion (Dodd et al., 2009), and $\alpha = .77$ to $\alpha = .86$ for adaptability (Townsend & Zabriskie, 2010).

Satisfaction with Family Life (SWFL). The SWFL scale is a modified version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), with the words *family life* replacing the word *life* in each item. The SWFL scale provides a brief, psychometrically sound, and widely applicable option for measuring satisfaction with family life regardless of country or parent/youth perspective (Zabriskie & Ward, 2013). The SWFL asked participants to respond to 5 items on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Data collected from parents and adolescents in several different family samples that vary across time, place, and culture have reported a consistent, unidimensional factor structure with a Cronbach's alpha ranging from $\alpha = .943$ to $\alpha = .790$. Acceptable psychometric properties have been reported for this scale, including construct validity, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability ($r = .89$) (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003; Zabriskie & Ward, 2013).

Socio-demographic information. Socio-demographic questions were included to identify the underlying characteristics of the sample. These items included age and gender of the parent and child, ethnicity, history of divorce, population of place of residence (rural, suburban, or urban), family size, and annual family income. Income was analyzed by grouping incomes into three categories: low (less than \$10,000 – \$29,999 annually), medium (\$30,000 to \$69,999), and high (\$70,000 to more than \$150,000).

Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 computer software and R version 11.1 (R Development Core Team, 2010). The lme4 library was loaded in R so the lmer() function could be used to analyze the linear mixed effects models (Pinheiro & Bates, 1996).

First, questionnaires with missing responses or impractical answers were eliminated in the data cleaning process. For example, a report that a family experienced over 24 hours of activity in a single day would have been considered impractical and was excluded from the study. Descriptive statistics and scores, including the mean and median values of both independent and dependent variables were then calculated.

In an effort to appropriately account for the multiple sources of variance found in family data, a mixed model analysis was necessary. When data are collected from two members of the same family, both individual and family variance components should be computed to provide a much clearer picture of family behaviors (Hodge et al., 2012). Scores from two members of a dyad are nearly always related, leading to underestimation of standard errors and increased Type 1 error if the observations are treated as independent (Newsom, 2002).

Two models were created for analysis. The first model used family functioning as the dependent variable, and core family leisure involvement, balance family leisure involvement, core family leisure satisfaction, and balance family leisure satisfaction as independent variables. Satisfaction with family life was the dependent variable for the second model, and the same independent variables were used. Demographic variables were included in addition to the leisure independent variables. By analyzing with a mixed model, the partitioning of variance explained by each variable and by each individual, as well as the group, is possible. This aids in

determining the nature of the relationship between each variable and family functioning, as well as satisfaction with family life. Initially, all demographic and other independent variables were included in the models used to predict the dependent variables. The models were then reduced using likelihood ratio tests until only significant independent variables remained (R Development Core Team, 2010).

Findings

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each parent and child ages 11 to 16 for: (a) family leisure involvement, (b) family leisure satisfaction, (c) family functioning, and (d) satisfaction with family life (see Table 1). Scores for these scales fell within normal parameters. Multicollinearity as indicated by $r > .90$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) was not found between any of the independent variables.

Mixed Model

Using a mixed model, individual and family level variance (both within and between) were appropriately accounted for in order to determine the relationship between core and balance family leisure involvement, core and balance family leisure satisfaction, and family functioning. The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) (ratio of between vs. total variation) was approximately 67.5% [$1.33/(1.33 + 0.64) = \text{var}(\text{family})/(\text{var}(\text{family}) + \text{var}(\text{error}))$] and represents shared variance in the responses of family, or in other words, how strongly individuals in the same family resemble each other. Shared variance was particularly high due to the nature of reporting on the same objective variable from two different perspectives. Family leisure involvement scores are an objective inventory of family behavior. Both parent and child are reporting the same joint behavior on the same scale, and, therefore, it is anticipated answers

should resemble each other quite closely even though participants were asked to fill out surveys independently.

Significant variables explaining variance for family functioning included core and balance family leisure satisfaction, core and balance family leisure involvement, and gender (see Table 2). Core family leisure satisfaction was the strongest significant predictor of variance in family functioning ($t = 9.37$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = 0.07$). There was also a positive relationship between balance family leisure involvement and family functioning ($t = 5.47$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = .01$), and between core family leisure involvement and family functioning ($t = 4.50$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = .01$). Balance family leisure satisfaction ($t = 3.11$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = 0.02$) and gender ($t = 2.65$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = 0.13$) were also significantly related. No other demographic variables were significant.

A second model was developed to assess the relationship between family leisure variables and satisfaction with family life. This model reported an ICC of approximately 51.34% [19.15/37.3] and included significant variables for core and balance family leisure involvement, core and balance family leisure satisfaction, low income (as defined above), and history of divorce (see Table 3). Core family leisure satisfaction was the strongest significant predictor of satisfaction with family life ($t = 11.50$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = 0.41$). Balance family leisure satisfaction ($t = 6.38$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = 0.23$), core family leisure involvement ($t = 2.78$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = 0.03$), and balance family leisure involvement ($t = 1.99$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = 0.01$) were also significant predictors of variance. Having low income had a negative relationship to satisfaction with family life ($t = -4.33$, $t_{crit} = 1.96$, $df = 500$, $\beta = -2.52$).

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to further examine the relationship between family leisure variables and the dependent variables of family functioning and satisfaction with family life among a broad, national sample of Canadian families. There were two distinct categories of independent variables—family leisure involvement and family leisure satisfaction. This study incorporated a mixed model approach which accounted for family-level and individual-level variance in the data analysis because the data were nested in families. Results are important for a number of reasons. First, results from the family perspective add further support to previous Canadian family leisure studies by reporting clear empirical relationships between family leisure variables and outcome variables of family functioning and satisfaction with family life, and do so from a family perspective with a large nationally reflective sample which allows for a greater level of generalizability to the Canadian population. Second, satisfaction with core family leisure was the single strongest positive contributor to the explanation of variance in both dependent variables (family functioning and satisfaction with family life) which is consistent with other recent findings in other countries, provides clear direction to families, and addresses some issues of constraints. Third, there were significant positive relationships between both core and balance family leisure involvement and outcome variables, emphasizing the need for family participation in both categories of family leisure involvement (core & balance). Although study limitations must be considered, findings have specific and meaningful implications for families, practitioners, scholars, and policy makers.

Consistent Results from National Canadian Sample

Perhaps the most important result of this study is that findings come from a different theoretical framework and methodological approach than most previous family leisure studies

among Canadian samples (Kowalski et al., 2012; Shaw, 2001; Shaw, 2008). Findings unmistakably supported qualitative scholars of the past several years by reporting clear empirical relationships between family leisure variables and outcome variables of family functioning and satisfaction with family life. The positive significant relationships found between family leisure involvement and family leisure satisfaction to satisfaction with family life reinforce studies suggesting that benefits from family leisure can be attainable despite constraints (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Others have also emphasized this relationship and the influence joint family leisure may have in building strong relationships between parents and children and husbands and wives, reflected by the positive relationships of involvement in leisure and satisfaction with leisure to family functioning found in this study (Brown, Frankel, & Fennell, 1991; Hutchinson, Afifi, & Krause, 2007; King et al., 2003; Shaw, 2008).

Current findings not only support the earlier body of work, but do so from a different framework. Relationships found by utilizing the Core and Balance model are consistent with studies from other countries and various family types. Zabriskie and McCormick (2003) found in their early use of the framework that involvement in both core and balance family leisure had direct relationships to higher reported family cohesion and adaptability. Other studies have followed that have found similar relationships, using various methods of analysis (Poff et al., 2010). In their study of father involvement, Buswell et al. (2012) found that from the adolescent and parent perspective, the quality of home-based, core family leisure that included father involvement was the greatest predictor of family functioning. Hornberger et al. (2010) found similar results in single-parent families. International studies outside of the United States have been relatively few, but scholars have found similar results among different cultures as well (Aslan, 2009; Fotu, 2007; Christenson, Zabriskie, Eggett, & Freeman, 2006). Current findings

are also consistent with a recent examination of Russian families (Williamson et al., under review) that found family satisfaction to be explained primarily by core family leisure satisfaction, as well as by core and balance family leisure involvement. It is clear that this study of Canadian family leisure fits well with what has been found previously and provides clear evidence of these relationships.

These data were considered to be hierarchically structured, because children and parents were nested within a family. By incorporating a mixed model approach, family-level and individual-level variance were accounted for, and therefore, this study helps to fill a gap in the literature. Many previous studies with multiple respondents in one family (i.e., parents and children) have taken an average of each individual's score to estimate a family score. These family scores are then used to estimate family level effects; however, statistically speaking, this may result in a loss of the richness of data. Researchers who ignore the hierarchical data may fail to see important phenomena such as cross-level interaction effects. A mixed model offers solutions to all of these analytical challenges (Newsom, 2002) through clustering, which allows the modeling of both dyad-level and individual-level variables.

Additionally, this study also moves beyond previous work that utilized small regionalized samples by reporting consistent findings from a large, geographically distributed national sample. The findings allow for generalizability of family leisure benefits to families throughout Canada and add further support to previous Canadian leisure studies in showing the importance of family leisure as a plausible tool for increased cohesion and adaptability within the family, as well as increased satisfaction with family life. Greater generalizability allows for a general extension of research findings from this sample population of families to families with similar structure across Canada. There is an enormous amount of family diversity across the nation

given its geographical and ethnic variety. With a nationally reflective sample of ethnicities and family types, valuable insight is added to assisting families regardless of location or origin.

These data can allow recreation providers to assist families become more actively involved in family leisure, knowing that families in diverse circumstances can obtain benefits of increased family functioning and family satisfaction related to family leisure. By examining the consumption and deficiencies of current leisure participation and what services are needed, policy makers, too, can be encouraged to assist providers in promoting family leisure now that current findings suggest such efforts could have noticeable impacts on families nationwide. For example, in remote locations of Canada where leisure activities are difficult to find or access, educating families on the benefits of home based core family leisure involvement as well as enabling greater opportunities to participate in balance family leisure through community recreation centers could have substantial impacts on the quality of family life. Those families who are constrained by various roadblocks to leisure may be more encouraged to prioritize differently in order to secure the potential advantages of family leisure, but this is difficult without the cooperation of those who create and alter social policies, particularly those regarding daycare and other various family issues. These findings provide substantial verification that under-utilized family involvement in leisure should be promoted in every way possible to foster enhanced family outcomes.

Core Family Leisure Satisfaction, Family Functioning, and Satisfaction with Family Life

The construct of core family leisure satisfaction was the strongest positive contributor to the explanation of variance in both family functioning and satisfaction with overall family life. Gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, and family income were all accounted for, as well as family-level and individual-level variance. Core family leisure satisfaction refers to how

individual family members perceive the quality of their leisure experiences in everyday, routine kinds of leisure activities. This finding adds to the existing literature in reaffirming that the benefits of family leisure are dependent more on the quality of the leisure taking place than on the quantity of family leisure. Canadian families that were satisfied with their core leisure together, regardless of the frequency or category of involvement, were more satisfied with their family life, and reported greater family functioning than those who were less satisfied.

A national time sample from Canada in 1992 indicated time spent in purposive, meaningful family leisure activities comprised an exceptionally small portion of the day (Shaw, 2001). More recent studies show that this pattern has only intensified as the strain of both parents working outside the home, increased demands from work and school, and concerns over health and well-being have amplified stress within in the family (Brannen, Emberly, & McGrath, 2009; Zuzanek, 2009). There has also been an influx of activities that require little interaction and generally promote little benefit to the family unit as a whole (Shaw, 2001; Smale, 2010). Parents, and particularly mothers, often feel they are inadequately providing benefits associated with participation in family leisure, and many become wary of the thought of planning family leisure due to the work involved and the difficulties associated with organizing and facilitating positive family experiences (Shaw, 2008; Trussell & Shaw, 2007). Providers of family leisure seem to be largely absent, and resources slim (Kowalski et al., 2012; Shaw, 2001). For parents and families who experience these constraints, this study adds to previous literature in suggesting that they are able to reap considerable benefits from their family leisure by simply focusing on the *quality* of their family interactions, rather than focusing only on increasing the *amount* of time spent in family leisure activities. Additionally, while both core and balance activities are advantageous in their own way, the benefits of core family leisure satisfaction in particular seem

to be particularly advantageous to developing positive, cohesive, healthy relationships, strengthening communication skills, learning to adapt in the face of challenges, and other benefits that make up family functioning and satisfaction (see Tables 2&3). There is potential for these skills to be achieved if efforts are made to provide more purposive and meaningful experiences that are regularly occurring in the home, which include activities such as eating dinner together, participating in hobbies, informal sports and yard activities together, and cooking or gardening together.

Previous Canadian studies have found similar results, including reports that home based activities such as riding bikes and playing games encourage interaction, family bonding, communication, and cohesion (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Similarly, in their study on the effects of shared family time following divorce, Hutchinson et al., (2007) found that everyday, organically occurring experiences such as a trip to Wal-Mart, playing games, going for walks, fixing cars, or “sitting out on the porch and talking” were among the most valued and aided adolescents in particular in letting their guard down and developing relationships with family members (p. 36). Encouragement of this pattern of core family leisure participation has clearly been suggested by several scholars and current findings add additional support from a broad national sample providing clear direction for Canadian families.

Constraints to leisure will always include time, money, and resources, and while even at-home leisure often requires organization, planning, time, and energy, there may not be as many constraints to effective family leisure as are often assumed. Acknowledging the finding that the driving force behind the positive relationship between family leisure variables and positive family outcomes is satisfaction with everyday, accessible, home-based, family activities such as eating dinner together, reading a book or watching a movie together, playing games together,

going on a walk, or simply sitting and talking or playing catch together inherently negotiates the most commonly identified constraints that revolve around time, money, and planning. Most core types of family leisure require no money, are often quite spontaneous, last from 5-20 minutes, and are indeed fairly simple in nature. The important point may simply be that they occur among family members and do so frequently.

Perhaps the state of mind conceptualizations of leisure (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997) should come back into play in regards to family leisure. It appears that family members, particularly parents, who have the mindset that it is ok or even good to take five minutes to laugh with a child while doing homework, take fifteen minutes to shoot hoops in the driveway with them, sit down for ten minutes and attempt to play a video game with them, a half hour to go to their soccer practice or dance rehearsal, five minutes to tell a story about their grandparents or listen to them talk about their day while doing dishes together, or go for a ten minute bike ride together are promoting multiple core family leisure experiences that add up to not much more than an hour a day. These kinds of experiences, however, convey interest, priority, a sense of fun, adventure, love, become very meaningful to family members, and are ultimately reflected in measures of core family leisure satisfaction. While intentionally facilitating positive leisure experiences and encouraging positive interactions among family may be perceived as a stressful overwhelming struggle, (Shaw 2001; Trussell and Shaw 2007), a distinct awareness of the potential impact and meaningfulness of the little things (core patterns of family leisure) coupled with a broader 'leisure as a state of mind' perspective is likely to assist parents in some constraint negotiation and ultimately make significant strides in terms of family functioning and overall family satisfaction among Canadian families.

Diverse Family Leisure Involvement and Family Functioning

The third key finding from this study was the significant positive relationship found between involvement in both core and balance family leisure, and outcome variables of family functioning and satisfaction with family life. This further supports the theoretical necessity for family participation in both categories of family leisure involvement (core & balance) in order to attain the family leisure satisfaction ultimately related to family functioning and satisfaction among Canadian families.

It has been established in family leisure literature that families who report more family leisure involvement tend to function at higher levels than those who report less, and families who participate in both core and balance family leisure fare better than those who report participation in only one or the other (Dodd et al., 2009; Freeman & Zabriskie, 2003; Hornberger, et al., 2010; Zabriskie & McCormick 2001). Examination from a family perspective underscores the role family leisure involvement plays as a foundation to family leisure satisfaction, as families are not likely to be satisfied with family leisure involvement if they have none. Core family leisure satisfaction was the strongest positive contributor to the explanation of variance in satisfaction with overall family life, as well as family functioning, but significance among both core and balance leisure involvement also suggests that in order for these outcomes to occur, there must be joint participation in family leisure in both core and balance activities (see Table 3).

In their study of marital leisure satisfaction, Ward, Barney, Lundberg, & Zabriskie (in press) found similar results for married couples as they noted that “balance leisure involvement alone is unlikely to lead to core leisure satisfaction, but it is also unlikely that core participation alone is enough to produce sufficient marital leisure satisfaction” (p. 24). Likewise, in family leisure it appears both core and balance leisure activities are crucial in order to achieve the skills

of adaptability and cohesiveness that eventually lead to enhanced family functioning, and, in turn, family satisfaction.

Those families that do not participate in either core or balance tend not to be satisfied with either, perhaps because essential proficiencies needed in order for satisfying relationships to blossom are underdeveloped or absent. In other words, routine core family leisure involvement such as having meaningful conversations and sharing hobbies provides a foundation for successful balance family leisure involvement which provides a context for challenge and growth. These proficiencies in the family can encourage further core family leisure, which leisure is likely more individually satisfying and rewarding given the strengthened relationships built along the way.

Limitations and Future Research

Although several implications exist from this study, it must be recognized that there are limitations as well. First, although this study was delivered to a large national sample, this sample was self-selected due to online data collection and inherently excludes certain populations from the study, such as those without computer access. Because the sample was limited to Canadian families with adolescent children between the ages of 11 and 16, generalizability is limited to families with similar structures. Future research should consider incorporating random sampling techniques and examining family leisure variables at various life stages and child respondent ages.

Second, the influence of the parent on the child completing the online questionnaire could not be controlled or measured, although they were asked through instructions to complete the survey independently. Implementation of other data collection methodologies could mitigate errors common in online data in regards to legitimacy of scores.

Current findings were consistent with those among other broad family samples (Agate, et al., 2009; Aslan, 2009; Buswell, et al., 2012; Poff, et al., 2010; Williamson et al., under review) that also reported disproportionately large relationships between core family leisure satisfaction and both family functioning and family satisfaction. Future research should attempt to gain a better understanding of this relationship and why these home-based, routine activity patterns are so impactful to cultures across the world. Qualitative research methods are invaluable for in-depth examinations and may be helpful in identifying specific characteristics and behaviors at the individual and family levels that make a difference to perceptions of core leisure satisfaction. Future research may also benefit by collecting data from all family members to gain a complete view of family leisure involvement and satisfaction, since possible societal factors may contribute to the importance of and satisfaction with certain activities and those may differ between family members.

Overall, current findings represent a significant contribution in verifying the understanding of the role family leisure plays in family functioning and family satisfaction for a variety of Canadian families. With all the hustle and bustle of today's society, where family time has been replaced with school functions, work meetings, and general busyness, knowing that relatively accessible, naturally occurring, and simple behavioral factors have the potential to influence the quality of life in Canadian homes is priceless. Specifically, confirming the finding that perceptions of the quality of family leisure involvement is more important when predicting family satisfaction than the quantity of leisure involvement among a large national sample stands out and could provide great consolation to those mothers and fathers who desire to attain the benefits of family leisure for their children, but feel overwhelmed at the task of providing enough opportunities. The benefits of family leisure are worth it, and are within reach.

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Table 1

Canadian Family Descriptive Statistics (N = 994)

	Parent Data		Youth Data	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Core Family Leisure Involvement	40.94	16.11	38.63	18.01
Balance Family Leisure Involvement	51.83	31.08	51.35	31.66
Total Family Leisure Involvement	92.77	40.27	89.98	43.56
Core Family Leisure Satisfaction	29.23	5.51	29.58	4.75
Balance Family Leisure Satisfaction	28.34	5.37	28.53	5.32
Total Family Leisure Satisfaction	57.57	10.88	58.11	9.25
Adaptability	59.93	9.81	57.03	10.21
Cohesion	46.81	7.44	44.62	8.60
Total Family Functioning	4.66	1.54	4.11	1.63
Satisfaction with Family Life	23.59	7.50	24.58	6.93
Cronbach's Alpha (α)	.931		.941	

Table 2

Independent Variables Estimating Variance in Family Functioning

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	t-value
(Intercept)	0.76	0.22	3.40
Gender	0.13	0.05	2.65
Core Family Leisure involvement	0.01	0.01	4.50
Balance Family Leisure Involvement	0.01	0.01	5.47
Core Family Leisure Satisfaction	0.07	0.01	9.37
Balance Family Leisure Satisfaction	0.02	0.01	3.11

$t_{crit} = 1.96, df = 500$

Table 3

Independent Variables Estimating Variance in Satisfaction with Family Life

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	t-value
(Intercept)	5.27	1.02	5.18
Low Income	-2.52	0.58	-4.33
Core Family Leisure Involvement	0.03	0.01	2.78
Balance Family Leisure Involvement	0.01	0.01	1.99
Core Family Leisure Satisfaction	0.41	0.03	11.50
Balance Family Leisure Satisfaction	0.23	0.04	6.38

$t_{crit} = 1.96, df = 500$