

FAMILIES AND LEISURE EDUCATION:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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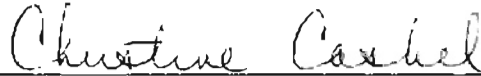
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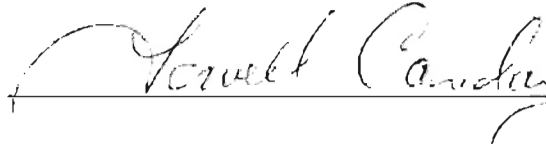
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most people can recall fond memories of times spent with their families in recreation; however, family recreation and leisure have received comparatively little attention from researchers. There seems to have been a general consensus among researchers and practitioners alike, that time spent in family recreation provides many positive benefits for family members. For example, Dr. Robert Couchman, director of the Family Service Association, Canada, declared that, "Shared family recreation experience seems to be a stronghold against the stresses of normal family and personal life" (Smith, 1997 p. 39). However, Nelson, Capple, and Adkins (1995) have stated that the efforts of professionals in the field of recreation and leisure are currently being directed toward helping the elderly, at-risk youth, women, and culturally diverse audiences. While they acknowledge that the importance of these groups cannot be overstated, they also believe that through attempts to focus on the individual concerns and problems of society, practitioners and researchers are ignoring the obvious: the fact that the family is the most basic organization of all human groups. The family can provide a focus for teaching and learning about all aspects of individual differences.

While most people would acknowledge the impact that family relationships and participation in family recreation activities can have on the lives of family members, only a relatively small number of studies have been conducted in this area. In addition, recent critiques of the existing research have found that all family members do not experience

the same benefits of leisure participation, and that for some families; there may be negative consequences. Shaw (1992) reported that increased family conflict and family workload stress are potential reasons for the negative experiences that some families report in relation to family recreation. In addition, some research provides support for the idea that in families that are not functioning well; joint participation in recreation activities may lead to an increased degree of family dysfunction (Shaw, 1997).

According to Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle (1983), the key elements of family functioning are cohesion, adaptability, and communication. They proposed that each of these dimensions of family functioning is best understood as existing on a continuum with both extremes considered as dysfunctional and the mid range considered as more functional. A combination of the extremes of any two of these elements represents the most dysfunctional family forms.

A qualitative case study including three families using interviews, observations, and questionnaires was conducted in an effort to better understand the relationship between leisure education programs and family functioning. The study followed the families through their participation in a series of six leisure education sessions. The families that participated in this study were selected from a number of families that were clients of a Marriage and Family Therapy agency in an urban area in the Southwestern United States.

The research questions that guided this study were designed to examine the relationship between family participation in a leisure education program, and family cohesion (closeness of family relationships), adaptability (the family's ability to adapt to change in the family or the surrounding environment) and the frequency of, and

satisfaction with family recreation experiences. The perspectives of all family members were studied in an effort to obtain a more complete understanding of these important relationships. Furthermore, this study examined the relationship between participation in a leisure education intervention, and the frequency and satisfaction of family recreation activities.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions that underlie this study. Leisure education can provide a means whereby families can obtain information and develop skills that can help them to work together to plan family activities that can meet the needs of all members of the family. For example, leisure education programs can help family members improve their communication skills, develop problem-solving skills, and acquire the ability to plan meaningful family activities. The obvious assumption of such leisure education programs is that the family members will learn and develop skills that, if maintained, can help families overcome the obstacles that prevent them from realizing the benefits of family recreation.

Dattilo (1999) explained that leisure education encourages participation in leisure activities by: "creating opportunities; building options; empowering individuals through a dynamic process; and developing relevant skills" (p. 41). The leisure education program implemented in this study was designed to assist families in crisis to strengthen their families through leisure participation by meeting each of these four criteria. The goal of the program was to strengthen the relationships within the family, enhance family adaptability, and increase overall satisfaction of shared family recreation experiences.

Therefore, assuming that the program was well designed and implemented, and such benefits exist, the participant families should experience increases in cohesion, adaptability, and satisfaction with family recreation.

Another key assumption of this study is that there are benefits to families who play together. In addition, leisure education is assumed to provide a means whereby families in crisis can learn and develop the skills that can enable them to attain the benefits of family recreation.

Anticipated Limitations

The families that participated in this study represented a variety of family sizes and compositions. While the variety of family types provided an opportunity to assess the impact of the leisure education program on different of families, the ability to make comparisons between families was somewhat limited. The small number of families participating in the study also accentuated this condition. Another potential limitation of the study involves the fact that the researcher developed and implemented the leisure education program, and also completed the data collection. However, the basic design of the study addressed these limitations through the utilization of a variety of methods of data collection and member checks.

One final potential limitation of the study involves the selection of the participant families. The director of the family therapy clinic screened each of the families for participation in the study. Therefore, each of the families shared the belief that family recreation has a positive impact on their families, and this belief may have biased them toward success. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study limited the generalizability of the findings and did not permit the study to identify the mechanism of

change for the participants. However, because the study is qualitative in nature, generalizability of the results was not really the goal of the study.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Introduction

Leisure has often been described as having the potential to present individuals with a multitude of benefits (Driver & Bruns, 1999). Many people often speak of leisure as a means of stress relief, and television advertisements emphasize the ability of their products to help people “get away” from the stresses and pressures of everyday life. While recreation and leisure have long been viewed as a means of personal renewal and self-discovery, very little research has been conducted to explore family recreation as a means of strengthening families. The general consensus has been that leisure and families are good for each other. In fact, a common belief has been “the family that plays together stays together” (Orthner, 1975 p. 91).

The research context chapter of this paper includes three major sections discussing family theory, family recreation, and leisure education. Each of these sections represents a crucial element of this paper and together they provide the rationale for the proposed study. Family systems theory provides the conceptual framework for understanding families, family recreation research identifies the potential benefits of participation in family recreation, and leisure education provides a potential means of helping families to learn to obtain the benefits of family recreation.

Family Theory

Family Systems Theory

Most of the research that has been conducted in the area of family recreation has used Exchange theory, Family Developmental theories, and Family Systems theory as the theoretical frameworks on which the studies were based. Family Systems theory provides a good description of the ways in which families develop and change over time. Therefore, Family Systems theory provided the framework which was used to conduct the proposed study. According to Family Systems theory, families are systems that are more than the sum of the qualities of the individuals in the system (holism), and occur within the context of broader systems. Elaborate relationships develop both within the overall family system, among members of the family subsystems, and among subsystems within the overall family.

The concept of boundaries symbolizes the idea of family cohesion or closeness. Boundaries illustrate the degree of closeness of the relationships between members of the given system, and with individuals or families outside the system (family). Family relationships that are that are extremely close are referred to as being enmeshed, while those that are extremely distant are referred to as being diffuse (Montgomery & Fewer, 1988).

Systems theory also views families as being capable of self-regulation, and as families are organized, patterns and norms develop in a way that allows information to move throughout the system. Families develop patterns of behavior or norms and rules about how the family is organized and what behaviors are acceptable within the family system. A center point at which family members feel comfortable with the patterns that

are established is called a setting. Some variation from the setting is acceptable and the amount of variation that is acceptable differs from family to family (Montgomery & Fewer, 1988). Adaptability is the concept that represents the family's ability to adjust the settings and allow change to occur as new information is introduced into the system. Adaptability also exists on a continuum from being extremely resistant to change (rigid) at one end, to being extremely open to change (chaotic) on the other.

Systems theory also holds that change is circular in nature and that a change in any one member is intertwined with the behavior of other family members. Systems work to preserve the status quo (homeostasis), and a process of continual feedback regulates change within the system. Any information that indicates a deviation from the norms or family rules that is greater than the acceptable limit (setting) is acted upon by a feedback loop. If the deviation leads to greater change in the system, it is termed positive feedback. If the deviation is decreased and the system remains the same (homeostasis) then it is called negative feedback (Montgomery & Fewer, 1988).

Circumplex Model

Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell (1979) have identified cohesion and adaptability as the underlying dimensions of the multitude of concepts in the family field. After identifying these crucial dimensions, they developed a model that could be used to help families in distress. They defined family cohesion as "the emotional bonding that family members have with one another, and the degree of individual autonomy a person experiences in the family system" (p. 5). Adaptability was defined as "the ability of a

[family] system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress” (Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, pp. 5-6).

Cohesion and adaptability are both identified as existing on separate continuums that have four levels ranging from an extremely low degree on one end, to a high degree on the other. Both ends represent less functional levels, while the more central levels are representative of a greater degree of balance. The cohesion continuum begins with disengagement, which is marked by a low degree of bonding (cohesion) and a high degree of individual autonomy. The two central levels (separated and connected) are marked by gradual increases in bonding and corresponding decreases in autonomy. The opposite end of the cohesion continuum (enmeshed) is marked by extreme closeness (bonding) and very little individual autonomy. On the Circumplex model, the cohesion continuum runs horizontally across the model, and the adaptability continuum runs vertically. The adaptability continuum begins at an extremely low level (rigid) where families tend to maintain the status quo, and progresses to the more central levels (structured and flexible) where there is a greater degree of adaptability. The other extreme of adaptability is chaos, which represents a state of continuous change and a complete lack of order (Olson et al., 1979).

The Circumplex model (appendix C) is used to interpret the results of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scores (FACES III) questionnaire to provide a cohesion score and an adaptability score. The scores for each dimension are then plotted on to the Circumplex model and changes in these dimensions of family functioning can then be identified with repeated measures of FACES III (Olson et al., 1979).

Family Recreation

Positive Outcomes

Benefits for Children. Research examining the ways in which family members spend their time have indicated that most individuals not only spend most of their leisure with family members, but also that many family members (both parents and children) would like to spend more leisure together (Holman & Epperson, 1984). Furthermore, in a national study involving over 300 self-described “happy families,” doing things together was identified as being one of the key determinants of their success (Stinnett, Sanders, DeFrain, & Parkhurst, 1982).

Research has been conducted to examine the impacts of family recreation on children at various stages of the life span. Research on infant attachment has been used to examine the impact of family recreation on infant development. Such studies have generally focused on playful interaction between infants and their mothers and have not included fathers or other siblings. However, the results of these studies indicate that for infants and toddlers, parent-child interaction helps to maintain an optimal level of arousal. Also, parent-child interaction also has been found to provide infants and toddlers with a feeling of control, which promotes self-confidence. Furthermore, parent-child interaction has been shown to facilitate attachment and encourages infants to explore their surroundings. Infants who experience a greater degree of interaction with parents have also been found to attend more closely to the social aspects of language (Orthner, Barnett-Morris, & Mancini, 1993).

Preschoolers who engage in family recreation, primarily parent-child interaction, have been found to be more likely to engage in fantasy play with objects, and their make

believe play is more sustained and complex. In addition, a mother's general responsiveness in reply to the child during periods of play has been shown to accurately predict the child's level of self-confidence, social responsibility, and math skills in kindergarten. Furthermore, physical play (especially with the father) was related to ratings of the child's popularity for both boys and girls (Orthner, et al., 1993).

As children enter into middle childhood and adolescence, leisure choices become increasingly limited by an increased preoccupation with socialization. By the time that children enter into adolescence, relationships with family in leisure consist of a combination of pleasure, amusement, trust, conflict, control, anxiety, and tension. Also, as adolescents become more interested in social interaction with peers, there is a dramatic decrease in parent-planned activities, and an increase in opposite sex interaction. Finally, participation in family recreation has been linked with improved adolescent-parent communication, and willingness to confide in parents (Orthner, et al., & Mancini, 1993).

Relationship Satisfaction. Although much of the research in this area has focused solely upon the positive aspects of participation in family forms of recreation, such information remains a useful tool for understanding family recreation and its impact on the relationship satisfaction of family members. Such research has indicated that improved communication among family members, higher quality of family relationships and enhanced cohesiveness are related to participation in family recreation. However, marital satisfaction, interaction, and stability all vary in relation to the type and amount of leisure pursued by spouses, varying by sex (Holman & Epperson, 1984; Orthner & Mancini, 1991). In this research, joint activities, parallel activities, and individual activities were examined as the varying types of leisure. *Individual* activities included

activities, in which one spouse participated without the other. *Parallel* activities included those activities in which both spouses are present but are not actively participating as a couple. *Joint* activities included those activities in which both spouses actively participated together. The results of the study indicated that when individual activities represented the predominant form of activities, they were found to have a negative affect on family functioning. Similarly, when parallel activities were predominant, participation in recreation was found to have a minimal correlation with the quality of family life. Not surprisingly, joint activities were found to have the greatest relationship to family satisfaction, interaction, and stability (Orthner, 1975). In fact, some research has indicated that shared recreation experiences are related to greater marital satisfaction, improved marital commitments, and even lower rates of divorce (Orthner & Mancini, 1993).

Role Satisfaction. Other research has examined the impact of family recreation on role satisfaction of various family members. The roles that have most commonly been examined were those of mothers, fathers and children. James, Schumm, Kennedy, Grigsby, Schectman and Nichols (1985) found that for fathers, leisure interaction had a significant effect on satisfaction with the parental role. A study by Siegenthaler and O'Dell (1998) also identified positive experiences in family leisure for fathers. They also noted that the family appears to be the primary context in which a father's leisure occurs.

While this relationship has been identified for fathers, the same correlation did not exist for mothers (James et al., 1985; Larson, Gillman & Richards, 1997). Larson et al. attempted to explain this difference by stating that, for mothers, family leisure is often inter-mixed with the role of caring for children and managing the home. They postulate

that such involvement may compromise the mother's experience of enjoyment and freedom. Siegenthaler and O'Dell (1998) also stated that, "mothers are likely to find that their family leisure is often intertwined with the roles of childcare and home management. These obligations appear to reduce the amount of enjoyment mothers receive from family leisure" (p.40).

For children, participation in family recreation tends to be positively related to role satisfaction. However, the adolescent period is associated with increased conflict with the family and with less positive affect in daily interactions than is experienced at earlier or later age periods. The study of role satisfaction and participation in family recreation has primarily focused on the roles of husband, father, wife, and mother. Very little research has examined the role satisfaction of children.

Constraints

As has been demonstrated in the previous section, much of the research examining family recreation has identified a relationship between joint family activities and increased satisfaction with family relationships. However, the same studies have also found that not all people seem to experience the benefits of participation in family recreation. A number of variables may serve to limit participation in, and satisfaction with, family recreation. These limiting variables are referred to as constraints. Some of these constraints have been identified in the body of research examining family recreation and include, the presence of young children in the home, the roles associated with being a mother.

Parents with Children in the Home. A number of studies have indicated that parents with children at home are less satisfied with and have little time for leisure, particularly personal or individual leisure. This "leisure lack" has been found to be especially acute for mothers and for parents of pre-school age children (Bernard, 1984; Dempsey, 1989; Firestone & Shelton, 1988; Glyptis & Chalmers, 1982; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1989; Wearing, 1990; Wearing & McArthur, 1988). Siegenthaler and O'Dell (1998) further state that families with children under the age of six reported the greatest leisure constraints with respect to family commitments. However, they also noted that couples with children reported the least difficulty in finding someone with whom to participate.

Although spouses with children in the home had less leisure interaction, shared leisure activity has been strongly associated with marital stability. In fact, lower amounts of shared leisure have been associated with a greater likelihood of marital disruption (Hill, 1988). According to this research, family recreation for parents with children in the home provides a great deal of stability to the family relationship. If this is true, then family recreation has the potential to provide these families with great benefits that could increase the likelihood of the continuation of the marital relationship. Further research that can provide support for these findings is required to more fully establish this relationship.

Women's Experience of Family Recreation. A number of studies have examined the absence of a significant correlation between family recreation and role satisfaction for women. Larson et al. (1997) found that not only do women appear not to experience an increase in role satisfaction from participation in family recreation, they also had more

consistently positive experiences during their non-family discretionary activities.

Holman and Epperson (1982) found that women working in the home tended to assume greater responsibility for organizing family recreation activities than did women employed outside the home. Overall, women have been found to be much more likely than males to initiate family recreation (Horna, 1989). Furthermore, Freysinger (1994) hypothesized that mothers may not perceive involvement with their children as true leisure experiences. This is based on the idea that mothers tend to experience difficulty separating family recreation from their daily role within the family because they continue to play the role of caregiver throughout the activity. Bialeschki and Michener (1994) examined women's experiences of family recreation and found that the leisure experiences of the women (focusing on self and autonomy) were often suppressed or even abandoned when the women married and became mothers. This leisure interruption remained for most of the mothers until their children left home, at which time active mothering demands decreased and the focus on self through leisure re-emerged. This same study also examined women's definitions of leisure and discovered that for mothers the meaning of leisure was fundamentally associated with freedom from obligations and freedom to focus on self. However, as life course transitions occurred with marriage and the addition of dependant children, the women in this study tended to not only have less available leisure, but they also sublimated the primary meaning of leisure and adopted a relational leisure meaning (Bialeschki & Michener). Obviously more research is warranted to develop a greater understanding of this area.

Negative Outcomes

As additional research begins to more fully examine the potential for negative outcomes of family recreation, the relationship between families and recreation can begin to more fully understood. Some research has indicated that negative outcomes do exist. Negative outcomes include problems such as increased family conflict or family workload stress (Shaw, 1992). Some research supports the idea that for families that are dysfunctional, participation in family recreation can serve to exacerbate the existing problems (Shaw, 1997). Other scholars have pointed out the possibility that family activities also can have the potential to act as constraints on individual leisure and autonomous leisure, especially for mothers (Harrington, Dawson, & Bolla, 1992; Samuel, 1993).

These constraints to family recreation can serve to limit or even eliminate the benefits associated with joint participation in family activities. However, leisure education may provide a means for assisting families to overcome these constraints and obtain the potential benefits of family recreation. The present study is based on a belief that many of these constraints to leisure can be overcome through leisure education.

Leisure Education

Leisure Education Foundations

Leisure education has been viewed traditionally as teaching knowledge and skills about a variety of activities or as the process of educating individuals for leisure by providing opportunities for participation through recreation programs. It is viewed as a developmental process that allows individuals to develop an understanding of themselves, leisure, and the relationships between leisure, lifestyles, and society. The

ultimate goal of leisure education is to enable individuals to enhance the quality of their lives through leisure. Leisure education is viewed as a process that helps individuals to determine the place and significance of leisure in their own lives, and to facilitate a leisure lifestyle development that is compatible with their own values, needs, and goals (Dattilo, 1999; Mundy, 1998).

Models of Leisure Education

Mundy (1998), Dattilo (1999), and Peterson and Stumbo (2000) have developed the three major models of leisure education that provide a framework for the development of leisure education programs. While each of these models contains some minor differences, each have a number of common elements. Each of these models include leisure awareness, self-awareness, social interaction, decision-making, and leisure skills as key components of a leisure education intervention.

The model proposed by Peterson and Stumbo (2000) is an adaptation of an earlier model proposed by Peterson and Gunn (1984). In their revised model, Peterson and Stumbo stated that the awareness of leisure and its benefits as well as a valuing of the leisure experience and a conscious decision-making process are important aspects of leisure involvement. Their model includes the components of: 1) leisure awareness; 2) social interaction skills; 3) leisure resources; and, 4) leisure activity skills.

Dattilo (1999) stated that leisure education is a process through which individuals can develop and enhance their knowledge, interests, skills, abilities, and behaviors to a level where leisure can make a significant contribution to the quality of their lives. His model includes the following components: 1) appreciate leisure; 2) be aware of self in

leisure; 3) be self-determined in leisure; 4) interact socially during leisure; 5) use resources facilitating leisure; 6) make decisions about leisure; and, 7) acquire recreation activity skills.

Mundy (1998) uses a similar model based upon Peterson's initial leisure education model with the following components: 1) leisure-awareness; 2) self-awareness; 3) decision making; 4) leisure skills; and, 5) social interaction. Each of the listed models further detailed their major components with a variety of similar subcomponents. Many leisure educators and practitioners believe that leisure education can play an important role in helping people to improve the quality of their lives. Bullock and Mahon (1997) have stated that leisure education holds the potential to play a very important role in helping people to develop an understanding of themselves and leisure.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the efficacy of leisure education, and a number of researchers have demonstrated that leisure education can have a positive impact on the leisure participation of individuals with a variety of needs (Anderson & Allen, 1985; Lanagan & Dattilo, 1989). Studies of the impact of leisure education in the lives of individuals with mental disabilities and those with severe and persistent mental illness have demonstrated that leisure education can serve to enhance leisure participation (Mahon & Bullock, 1992; Mahon, Bullock, & Luken, 1993). Similarly, McDonald and Howe (1989) implemented a study to examine the benefits of leisure education for the victims of child abuse. The program implemented in this study also included a challenge/initiative-based component and was presented to a sample of thirty-eight individuals. The results of the study indicated that participation in the leisure education program significantly enhanced the self-concept of participants.

Additional studies have explored the benefits of participation in leisure education programs for the elderly with similar results. One such study investigated the effects of a leisure education program on the psychological well being of elderly patients in a day hospital. Participants were separated into two groups with one group attending a leisure education program, and a control group receiving no treatment. The results of the study indicated that the group that attended the leisure education program had a higher sense of perceived leisure competence than the control group (Searle & Mahon, 1991). An additional follow-up study three months later showed that the experimental subjects had sustained their higher levels of perceived leisure competence (Serle & Mahon, 1992).

Although each of these studies involved subjects from different populations, participation in leisure education programs provided the participants with valuable benefits. Based on the results of these studies, it would seem to follow that family participation in a leisure education program may have the potential to provide families with important benefits as well.

Leisure Education with Families

A variety of leisure education programs have been developed to aid the family by enhancing the level of family functioning through leisure. It appears that a number of these programs have been designed to work with families with special needs such as handicapped persons, chemically dependent adolescents, and individuals with mental disabilities. Monroe (1987) developed a program aimed at enhancing family relationships through leisure participation. The program was designed to improve interaction skills, increase parenting skills and to develop leisure awareness skills and

abilities for families with handicapped individuals. DeSalvatore (1989) developed a program that uses a team approach utilizing a variety of medical and mental health professional and recreational therapists to improve overall functioning by using activities and play. Witman and Munson (1992) developed a Leisure Awareness and Action program to enhance family cohesion and effectiveness using three modules 1) playing together, 2) patterns and possibilities, and 3) problems and prospects by utilizing a variety of games and play activities. Atteberry-Rogers (1993) also developed a program of sixteen leisure education sessions that were designed to provide families with an opportunity to interact with each other in a playful manner that was less threatening than the traditional therapeutic family session.

While several leisure education programs for families have been designed and implemented, very little research has been conducted that attempts to identify the benefits of participation in such programs. However, "programs of this nature are seen as being effective in developing communication and parenting skills, enhancing the family self-esteem and in integrating handicapped individuals into community recreation programs" (Monroe, 1987).

Summary of Literature

Most research on the topic of family recreation has used Exchange theory, Family Developmental theories, and Systems theory as the frame of reference of the studies. Furthermore, most previous studies have focused on the effects that a recreation experience has on the family in terms of overall relationship satisfaction. The present study represented an attempt to determine if the reported increases in relationship

satisfaction are also related to increases in family cohesion and adaptability. Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell (1979) have identified cohesion and adaptability as two important aspects of marital and family behavior that emerge as the fundamental dimensions of the many concepts in the family field. Therefore, this study represents an attempt to examine the relationship between family participation in leisure education and the fundamental dimensions of family behavior.

In the leisure education sessions the families were taught to understand and appreciate leisure, to develop a greater sense of self-awareness and of their attitudes regarding leisure, and to develop the necessary skills required for participation in leisure activities. Families were taught skills to aid them in developing the ability to effectively plan and enjoy family recreation and leisure experiences. Previous research has lacked such an intervention component.

Also, little prior research has examined the impact of leisure education on families from the perspectives of each family member. Furthermore, very little of the past research has examined the experiences or perspectives of children in family recreation. Much research discusses the negative impact of family recreation for mothers based on the fact that the mother's role often includes responsibility for the planning and implementation of the activity as well as the continual responsibilities of care giving and nurturing. In an effort to address the variety of differing perspectives of various family members, this study will examine the perspectives of fathers, mothers and children regarding family cohesion and adaptability before and after participation in a leisure education intervention.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

A modified pre-post design using mixed methods was chosen to facilitate the accumulation of in-depth information about the relationship between leisure education intervention and overall family functioning. In order to maintain a manageable size for the study, a case study method was employed and the sample consisted of three families. Using this approach, the data generated by this study provided rich information that can serve to enhance our understanding of the relationship that recreation and leisure may have for improving overall family functioning.

The research methods chapter of this paper describes the procedures that were followed throughout the course of the project. A complete description of the research questions is presented, followed by a report of the methods that were used to obtain participants for the study. Each of the methods used to collect data are then discussed including the procedures that were followed and the time frame for their completion. A separate section dealing with the leisure education sessions that make up the intervention or treatment for this study are then outlined. The next three sections include a discussion of the proposed methods of data analysis, and the steps that were taken to ensure that the conclusions are trustworthy and that the data was obtained in an ethical manner. The final section of this chapter includes a discussion of the potential implications of this study for the field of recreation and leisure.

Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between a leisure education program and family cohesion (the closeness of family relationships)?
 - A. How do fathers perceive the relationship between a leisure education program and family cohesion?
 - B. How do mothers perceive the relationship between a leisure education program and family cohesion?
 - C. How do children perceive the relationship between a leisure education program and family cohesion?

2. What is the relationship between a leisure education program and family adaptability (the family's ability to adapt to change)?
 - A. How do fathers perceive the relationship between a leisure education program and family adaptability?
 - B. How do mothers perceive the relationship between a leisure education program and family adaptability?
 - C. How do children perceive the relationship between a leisure education program and family adaptability?

3. What is the relationship between participation in a leisure education program and the frequency and satisfaction of family recreation?

Participants

Participants for this study were selected from the client base of a Family Therapy agency in an urban area in the Southwestern United States. The director of the Family Therapy agency selected the participant families for this study based on the director's assessment of client readiness for such a program, and on the individual family's willingness to participate. This Family Therapy agency was selected as the site for data collection due to the availability of the site, and the willingness and enthusiasm of the director to combine Family Therapy techniques with leisure education as a means of working with client families. The leisure education sessions were conducted at a local Community Center on a weekly basis, each lasting between 1-1 ½ hours. The frequency and duration of the leisure education sessions is consistent with the length and frequency of the Family Therapy sessions that the families have previously been attending.

Data Collection

This study includes three different methods of data collection including questionnaires, observation, and interviews. The utilization of these three methods in combination provided the researcher with a variety of information from which to develop conclusions. A mixed methods approach, including a modified pre-post design was used to determine the relationship between a leisure education intervention and overall family functioning. Family interviews and a questionnaire were also administered prior to the intervention, and observations were conducted throughout the course of the leisure education sessions. Upon conclusion of the intervention phase of the study, participants were again asked to complete the questionnaire and participate in individual interviews.

Data collection was an ongoing process that continued throughout the entire duration of the study. Approval for this study was received from the Institutional Review Board of Oklahoma State University (appendix G).

Questionnaire

The FACES III questionnaire represented the first method of data collection and was given to family members prior to their participation in the leisure education sessions. FACES III is a 20 item questionnaire using a Likert type scale ranging from “almost never”, to “almost always.” The family version of FACES III generally takes between 15-30 minutes to complete and was completed by all family members including school aged children. The results of the FACES III questionnaire were interpreted using the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Appendix C). An analysis of the Clinical Rating Scales of FACES III has determined good construct validity based on the fact that a factor analysis produced the three dimensions of the Circumplex Model (cohesion, adaptability, and communication) with minimal overlap between items in the three scales. Additionally, the three dimensions had “high levels of internal consistency (alpha) reliability (.95 for cohesion, .94 for adaptability, and .97 for communication). Also, the inter-rater reliability was high, with percentage of agreement of 95% for cohesion, 91% for adaptability, and 97% for communication” (Olson, 1991, p. 77). While the high degree of inter-rater reliability is important for establishing the overall reliability of the FACES III instrument, a high degree of inter-rater reliability is not crucial to this study because the same individual will score all questionnaires.

Observations

The initial administration of FACES III was followed by a series of six weekly leisure education sessions. Each session lasted between 1 and 1 ½ hours and all members of each of the three families participated jointly in each of the six sessions as much as was possible. However, due to a number of scheduling conflicts, a number of the sessions were attended by only two of the families. On occasions when a given family was not able to attend the group sessions, a make-up session was held for that family. The researcher served as the facilitator of the leisure education sessions. The content of each of these sessions was videotaped to provide an accurate record of session content.

The analysis of these tapes focused on identifying interactions that provided insight into each family's degree of cohesion (closeness), communication style, and ability to adapt to change. The individual recordings were reviewed as soon as possible following each session and a tape log was kept for each of the videotapes that identified the location of each of the major components of the sessions on the tape. Portions of the session that are particularly relevant to the study were identified on the tape log, and completely transcribed. In addition to these transcriptions, memos relating to each observation period were written to connect the information collected during the entire six sessions.

Interviews

The initial interviews were conducted prior to the beginning of the leisure education intervention. However, one of the initial families dropped out of the study following the family interviews and was replaced by a fourth family. This new family

joined the study and was interviewed following the first leisure education session. Each of the family interviews were approximately one hour in duration. These interviews were used to obtain a general idea of the recreation patterns of each family. Additionally, these interviews allowed the researcher to begin to gain a basic understanding of family cohesion, communication styles, and adaptability (based on FACES III). Interview questions focused on these areas of family functioning and example questions are located in appendix D of this paper. Following the completion of the leisure education sessions, the FACES III questionnaire was again be administered and the results were compared to their initial responses to identify any possible changes in the individual family's cohesion and adaptability scores. After the completion of this questionnaire, all participants were interviewed on an individual basis. Each of these interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes with all members of one family being interviewed on the same night. All interviews, including the initial interviews, were audiotaped to record the data gathered from participant responses. Each family was interviewed during the one-week period immediately following the conclusion of the leisure education sessions. Interview questions were be based on the data collected from the FACES III questionnaire, notes taken during the observations, content of leisure education sessions, all in relation to the research questions. Sample questions for the individual interviews are located in appendix D of this paper.

Personal Journal

Throughout the course of this study the researcher also kept a personal journal detailing his thoughts about the information that has been collected. This journal was

used to demonstrate the progression of thinking about the data, and describes the reasoning behind the conclusions and results of the study. In addition, the journal provides the link between the observation data, interview data, questionnaire data, and the progression of ideas that form the conclusions of the study.

Leisure Education Intervention

The leisure education program consisted of a series of six sessions that helped the participant families to learn and develop: 1) communication skills; 2) self awareness and respect for others; 3) family cohesion and compromise; 4) problem solving skills; 5) coping skills and strategies; and, 6) leisure planning skills. (A more detailed description of the content of these sessions is included in Appendix E). All of the members of the three families were asked to participate in each of the six sessions and the families attended the sessions together as often as possible. Each of the leisure education sessions was comprised of a number of activities designed to illustrate the content of the given session. At the conclusion of each of the sessions, families were given a homework assignment that required them to implement what they had learned in the session throughout the following week. At the beginning of each session, the experiences of each of the families were briefly reviewed, problems were discussed, and families were complemented for their progress.

The first session focused on teaching communication skills to aid family members in the development of active listening skills, and also illustrated the importance of clearly communicating individual thoughts and feelings to other family members. The goal of this session was to provide family members with the skills that would enable them to

communicate with one another in such a way as to enhance the quality of their relationships with other members of the family. By more effectively communicating their thoughts and feelings to one another, families would be better able to plan and enjoy their time spent in family recreation and leisure.

The second session focused on helping family members identify their personal interests and preferences for leisure participation. Family members were also guided through the process of developing an awareness of their own attitudes and values about family recreation and leisure, and were encouraged to discuss their beliefs and attitudes about family leisure participation with the other members of the family. Respect for the ideas and opinions of the other family members was emphasized throughout the process of the session. By becoming more aware of their personal preferences, family members were better prepared to participate in the planning of family activities that meet their own needs. The potential for each family member enjoying and benefiting from participation in family recreation and leisure experiences increases when the values and interests of each family member are considered in the planning of the activities.

Family cohesion was the focus of the third session and emphasized the development of meaningful relationships within the family. Activities in this session were designed to provide family members with the opportunity to participate in activities as a family. Following the activity family members were encouraged to discuss their experience as a group. The positive aspects of their experiences were highlighted in order to emphasize the potential that family recreation holds for improving relationships within the family. In addition, this session also focused on the importance of developing social relationships outside of the family and balancing these relationships with family

relationships. Finally, the importance of compromise in the development and maintenance of relationships was emphasized. The goal of this session was to help family members to recognize the importance of relationships and to develop the skills such as the ability to compromise, which are necessary for the development and maintenance of meaningful relationships. By developing these skills, family members should be better able to establish relationships in all areas of their lives.

The fourth session focused on helping family members to develop problem-solving skills that they can be used in the process of planning and implementing family activities that could more effectively meet the needs of all family members. Family members were asked to identify the problems that they believe may make their family activities less enjoyable and more difficult to plan and implement. Then they were guided through the process of identifying ways that they can overcome those problems and plan activities that they can enjoy doing as a family. As families learn to work together to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of their goals, they can become much more effective at planning and carrying out activities that are enjoyable for all family members and aid in the development and strengthening of relationships within the family.

The goal of the fifth session was to guide families in the development of coping skills that would allow family members to more effectively manage the stress and pressures of everyday life (jobs, school, financial situation, responsibilities, etc). Stress management techniques and time management skills were demonstrated, and the influence that the effective implementation of these skills can have on family functioning

represented the focus of this session. Additionally, the potential that leisure participation can have for reducing stress was emphasized.

The final leisure education session was designed to help families to develop the necessary leisure planning skills to use what they have learned to improve the quality of their recreation and leisure activities. Family members were reminded of the skills that they have begun to develop in previous sessions and through the process of completing their homework. They were taught to plan activities that can enhance family relationships and meet the interests of individual family members. It is anticipated that as families develop the ability to plan such leisure activities, they should experience a corresponding improvement in the overall functioning of their family.

Data Analyses

The data obtained during each phase of data collection were subject to a continual process of review. Questionnaire data were analyzed using the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems which places families into one of sixteen different family types based upon where the data from the questionnaire placed the family on the continuums of family cohesion and adaptability. Once the observation phase of data collection began, field notes taken during the leisure education sessions were transcribed and memos were written which documented the possible connections between the questionnaire data and the observation data. The second round of FACES III data was also be interpreted using the Circumplex Model, and data were compared with the data from the initial application of the questionnaire. Moreover, these data were also compared to the observation field notes and memos. During the interview phase of data

collection, a log was kept to identify the location of participant responses on the audiotape. Particularly relevant responses were transcribed, and memos were written to combine the data from all phases of data collection. The entire collection of data was coded to rearrange the data into categories that facilitate the comparison of the data within and between these categories. In addition, all of the data were subjected to a review conducted by a thesis committee.

Trustworthiness

In order to deal with questions of trustworthiness, a researcher must first be aware of personal biases in regard to the study. The researcher believes that there is tremendous potential for leisure education to be used as a means of improving the quality of family relationships. In order to offset this bias, the researcher used a number of methods of data collection and review, and to continually examine the data for alternate explanations.

The FACES III questionnaire and the Circumplex Model have been used extensively in the field of Family Therapy since they were introduced in the 1970s. FACES III has proven to be very reliable and has also exhibited a great degree of validity. To ensure that data derived from the observation phase of the study was valid, detailed field notes were taken immediately following the sessions, and included only a concrete description of what exactly was said and what exactly occurred. The field notes were augmented by a review of the videotapes as soon as possible following each session. Any additional notes were placed in a column next to the original notes. From these notes, an interpretive memo was written which attempted to derive meaning from the observations. At no time prior to the completion of these memos was any attempt at

interpretation made. The interpretive memos also provided a means to increase the dependability of the conclusions of the study by demonstrating the progression of ideas throughout the observations.

A personal journal was also kept detailing the thoughts of the researcher about the information that had been collected. This journal was also used to demonstrate the progression of thinking about the data, and enhanced the dependability of the study by providing a clear link between the ideas of the researcher and the observation data, interview data, questionnaire data, and the progression of ideas that form the conclusions of the study. Members of the thesis committee also reviewed the contents of the journal to further strengthen the conclusions of the study.

All interviews were audiotaped to ensure exactness of data. A log was kept of the location of each question on the tape, and particularly relevant responses were completely transcribed. Interview questions were also open-ended and leading or closed-ended questions were avoided to ensure that the responses were based on the individual participant's thoughts and beliefs.

A number of methods (questionnaires, interviews, observations, and a personal journal) were also used to collect information from a diverse range of individuals, settings, and methods. By triangulating the methods of data collection and obtaining a variety of individual responses in the interviews, the potential for the existence of serious threats to the credibility was limited.

The duration of the study and the personal level of involvement of the researcher in the study also contributed to the credibility of the results. The researcher spent at least eight weeks working directly working with participants in order to gain a more complete

understanding of the relationship between leisure education and overall family functioning. The interviews allowed the researcher to work directly with participants as individuals and as a family unit. During the six-week leisure education intervention, the researcher had the opportunity to work directly with participant families and establish a good rapport and build relationships of trust that enhanced his ability to immerse himself in the culture and contexts of the family.

Member checks were also be used to ensure that the researcher's interpretation of participant responses was accurate and complete. Member checks were used during both the data collection and data analysis phases of the study and were both formal and informal in nature. Formal member checks occurred at the beginning of each leisure education session as previous sessions were reviewed. Also, at the conclusion of each of the interviews, the researcher's understanding of the interview content was summarized and participants were asked to clarify or add information. Member checks were also implemented during the data analysis phase of the study to insure that the researcher's understanding of the data accurately reflects participant and family culture and experience. Member checks served to strengthen the credibility of the study by allowing the researcher to assess the intent of participant actions, and to give participants the opportunity to correct any errors of fact or interpretation as well as provide additional information.

Finally, members of the thesis committee reviewed all of the data collected in this study. This process allowed the researcher to obtain a variety of information from a number of professionals within the field of recreation and leisure. Obtaining feedback

from these individuals served to further limit the potential threats to the validity of the findings of this study.

Ethics

The Family code of ethics of the American Association of Marital and Family Therapy (AAMFT) requires that information regarding the therapist-client relationship to be kept strictly confidential. The confidentiality agreement prohibits the therapist from even identifying the individual or family as a client of the agency. Client confidentiality can be breached only in cases where the client is deemed to be a danger to self and/or others, or with the written consent of the client. As a result, information regarding the participants' history with the Family Therapy agency was not used in this study. In addition, clients were required to sign a Consent Form to allow the director or the Family Therapy agency to select participants for this study.

All participants were informed of the format of the study prior to the beginning of any data collection. The content of the leisure education sessions, the FACES III instrument, and the interviews were clearly explained prior to the beginning of the study. All participants were required to sign an Informed Consent form prior to their participation in the study. Moreover, all participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.

In relation to the data generated by this study, the names of families and individual family members are not connected to the data in any way. On questionnaires and in observation and interview notes and memos, families were referred to as family

#1, family #2, or family #3 (F1, F2, F3). Mothers, fathers, and children were referred to by family number and role within the family (e.g. F2M, F2F, F2C). In families where there was more than one child, the children were referred to by number as well (e.g. F1C2 for the second child in family number one). To avoid the cumbersome nature of these designations, imaginary family names were attached to each of the families for the final draft of the study. At no time were the actual names of participants used in notes, memos, or write-up of the data. Additionally, family members were not allowed access to each other's data.

Due to the fact that the interviews were audiotaped, verbal consent was obtained prior to making a recording. The use of videotapes also presented unique ethical concerns. All participants were informed of the use of videotaping equipment in the leisure education sessions. The importance of the videotapes to the study was explained to all participants prior to the beginning of the data collection phase of the study. Also, information regarding the use of videotapes was included in the Informed Consent forms that were signed by participants. The videotapes were viewed only by the researcher, and by members of the thesis committee, and were kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. In addition to the written consent forms, participants were asked for verbal consent at the beginning of each session. After the conclusion of the project, the tapes were erased to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Additional approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University (Appendix G).

Implications

It is the belief of the researcher that leisure education and family recreation can play an important role in strengthening family relationships in a time where the breakdown of the family continues to increase at an alarming rate. In our society today, approximately half of first marriages end in divorce and one parent takes over the roles of breadwinner and housekeeper. Related to the high rate of divorce, stepfamilies are also more common today as these individuals remarry. Also, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of dual income families and families who do not have children. In fact, fewer than 15% of families are considered the traditional family (Nelson et al., 1995). In discussing the challenge of defining families, Orthner (1998) explained that it is almost easier to describe today's families as a process than a status.

Family life has become so full of unexpected twists and turns, that scholarly observers, service providers, and the public at large are having trouble just defining the family, let alone capturing its needs or trying to meeting them. It used to be easier to talk about families. Dating usually preceded sexual intimacy, marriage usually preceded parenthood, parenthood usually preceded middle age, and old age preceded marital separation and death. Today, these patterns still exist, but there are many other ways that families develop, too. The majority of youth have sex outside of marriage, often in less serious relationships. Many children are born into families where the father is absent or even unknown. Some couples have their first child in mid-life, and some decide not to have children at all. And in about half of all first marriages, divorce, not death, precipitates relational parting...couples are more likely to live together before

getting married, and wait on average, until they are in their later 20s before getting married. Children are coming later, but about one couple in 10 decides not to have children at all (Orthner, p.87).

It is the position of the researcher that family recreation has great potential to strengthen our families, and the research that has been conducted in this area seems to add support to this belief. Some research has indicated that not all members of the family seem to experience the same benefits of participation in family activities. Additionally, some research has indicated that for families that are experiencing difficulties, family recreation may only serve to amplify the existing difficulties. However, the researcher believes that leisure education sessions can help families to develop more effective communication skills as well as help them to work together to plan activities that meet the needs of all family members. If leisure education sessions can serve this purpose, then even families that are experiencing difficulties may be able to benefit from participation in family recreation. If this is the case, then there is great potential for leisure education and family recreation to strengthen families and society as a whole.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

In this section of the paper, each of the families are discussed individually in order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the composition and functioning of each family. The data obtained through the course of the study are presented as the information from each family is examined through the lens of the research questions. Direct quotations of the participants have been modified for grammar or language. A complete description of the leisure education sessions in which the subject families participated is located in appendix E. Similarities and differences between families are included in the discussion section of this paper.

The Smith Family

The first family in this study will be referred to as the Smith family. Mr. and Mrs. Smith have been married for nine years and have three children, Kent, Steve, and Tim. Kent and Steve are 15 year-old fraternal twins, and Tim is 9 years old.

Mrs. Smith is the family manager and the glue that holds this family together. In one of the leisure education sessions, she accurately referred to herself as the "*mother eagle that watches over everyone.*" Also, when questions were asked during the sessions, she was generally the one who would speak for the family and would frequently attempt to add to or clarify statements made by other family members. Mrs. Smith also

serves as the coordinator of this family. She is the one who makes sure that family members get where they are supposed to be, and initiates and plans most family activities. She has made sure that all family members have come to each session even though at times, they clearly would rather have been somewhere else. She also seems to be the most invested in strengthening the family. She has been the one person in the family who has made a consistent effort to learn and develop the skills that we have practiced in the sessions.

While Mrs. Smith is the family manager, Mr. Smith is the most effective disciplinarian in the family. Mrs. Smith makes a greater number of attempts at discipline, but she is often ignored. On the other hand, Mr. Smith makes far fewer attempts at disciplining his children, but his efforts are much more successful. He often appears to be very quiet and uninvolved, but when one of the children acts up a little too much for his liking, he tells them to stop and they generally listen to him. During the sessions, he tended to be very quiet and spoke only when asked a question. He participated in each session, but only did what he was asked and rarely seemed to do more than that. He is very supportive of Mrs. Smith's ideas and efforts to direct the family. Mr. Smith also works the night shift Monday through Friday, and sleeps at home during the days.

All members of the family refer to Steve as a loner and he is taking medication for Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). He stated that he would rather do something "*by myself than do something with the whole family.*" Although he is described as a loner, he often engages in behaviors that seem to be intended to get a reaction from the others in the room, particularly the adults. Everyone else in the family seems to expect him to say or do something a little strange and they almost ignore his misbehavior. Steve also gets

away with a lot of misbehavior that his brothers could not. During the sessions, Steve would regularly get up and walk around the room to look at items on the shelves and on occasion would leave the room altogether. Mr. and Mrs. Smith would rarely say much of anything to him unless he began to play with the video equipment. Neither Kent nor Tim was afforded the same luxury. In fact, Steve often seems to gain control of the family with his behavior. For example, during one of the sessions he realized that they would not complete the activity in time for him to return home to watch his favorite television program. At that point he became very upset and began to act out by pacing around the room and complaining that the other family members should "*hurry up and finish the activity*" so that he could go home. When Mrs. Smith ignored his behavior, he left the room and did not return for some time. As soon as he left, Mrs. Smith pulled the rest of the family together and quickly completed the activity.

In one session Mrs. Smith referred to Kent as a "*bridge between the other two boys*." Kent shares a bedroom and many interests with Tim. They often engage in leisure activities together and have a number of common friends. Kent was very involved in the sessions and stated that he "*likes being around other people, I like to socialize, I like to talk, and have fun and have a good time... find some common ground, anything that we can do together, hang out at the park, go shopping together, anything that can create a bond with the family is what I like*." He is very compliant with the wishes of his parents and is often overlooked when Steve acts out.

Tim also tends to get lost in the shuffle in this family. Mrs. Smith describes Tim as being very dependant upon her to the point that "*he thinks he owns me and can't function without me*." Tim was very active in the sessions and seemed to work well with

the family on shared activities. Although he was occasionally loud and obnoxious, his actions were generally within the scope of the activity.

Cohesion

Mrs. Smith believes that family activities have an important impact on the members of the family. She stated that when they are doing more things as a family, there is *“more of a camaraderie...especially among the boys. A lot of the time there is so much competition and stuff that it is actually nice when they all will stick up for each other and look out for each other.”* Additionally, Mr. Smith reported that doing things together allows everyone in the family to *“get on the same page and to get to know what is going on in each other’s lives.”* However, unlike Mrs. Smith, he thinks that the family activities are more beneficial to he and Mrs. Smith because they get a chance during those times to *“talk about the things that they need to talk about while the kids get to run around and do what they want to do.”*

The FACES III scores for the members of the Smith family indicate that the family members perceive the family very differently. Prior to the sessions, the scores of four out of the five family members fell within the central ranges on the Circumplex model (Figure 1 and appendix C). Steve and Mr. Smith's scores suggest that they viewed family members as being somewhat separated, while Mrs. Smith and Kent seemed to view family members as being connected. However, Tim’s scores indicated that he viewed the members of the family as being enmeshed with one another. Following the leisure education sessions, each family member completed the FACES III questionnaire a second time (Figure 2). The second administration indicated that the scores of family

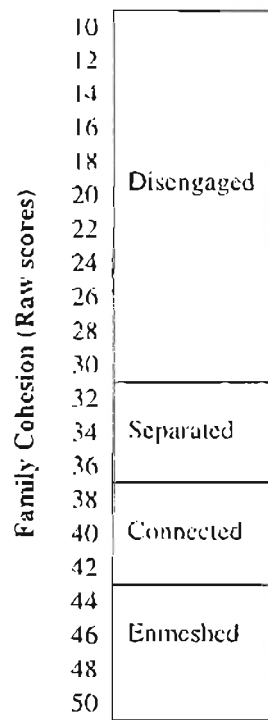


Figure 1: Norms and Cutting Points for Cohesion

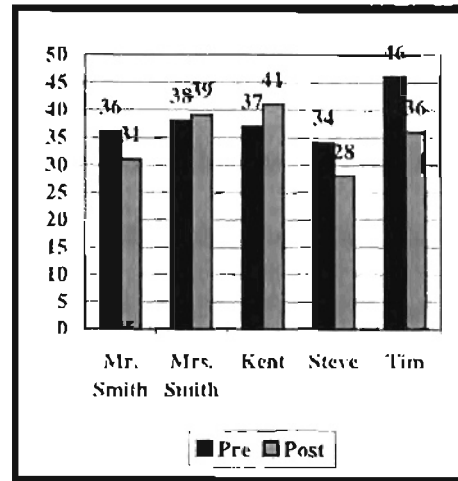


Figure 2: Smith Family Cohesion

members had all changed to some degree. However, Tim's cohesion score after the second administration of the questionnaire was much lower and fell within the separated range. Steve's scores also decreased enough to fall slightly within the disengaged range on the Circumplex model. Although each person's scores changed slightly, the scores of each of the other three family members remained within the same ranges after the second administration.

Additionally, Steve does not seem to be very interested in spending time with the family. He stated that he would usually like to *“do things by myself rather than with the entire family because I just feel more comfortable alone.”* Kent identified another potential reason for Steve's reluctance to spend time with the family when he said that, *“Steve is in his own little world. He likes to do things with us when from his perspective*

it is fun. But if in his own perspective it is boring, then he is like I want to go home because he thinks he can do stuff on his own and he can't come together with us. It is like the rest of the family is over here and his suggestions are way over here." Whatever the reason, Steve does believe that doing things together brings the family closer together. He reported that most of their family recreation involves the boys *"doing our own thing, and Mr. and Mrs. Smith watch us play"* and that the *"parents rarely join in except when they watch a movie."* Kent acknowledged that there are *"good days and bad days"*, but that when they are doing things together, they *"are more communicational with one another, we communicate real well."* He stated that he believes that the family members *"feel closer together, definitely closer when we are doing things together"* and that even though *"me and Steve don't really talk to each other that much, it also helps me get closer to him."* Finally, Tim believes that generally when the family gets together for activities, they have fun because *"we are all together and not with a crowd of people."*

Mrs. Smith believes that *"we all just kind of go our own ways if we don't do something together once in a while, I guess there is more division emotionally, argument wise and all that."* Kent stated that when they are *"just hanging around the house, the atmosphere is kind of low and boring, but when they are doing things together the atmosphere is real happy and energetic."* Mrs. Smith also said that, *"I believe that doing [recreational or leisure activities] is very important, it would probably bring us closer together if we could do it more often."*

In the third session on family cohesion and compromise, each of the families were asked to make a *"family sculpture"* that would represent their family's patterns of functioning. When the Smith family completed their sculpture, Steve was quite far

removed from the other family members. When asked about this separation, Mrs. Smith replied that she believes that Steve *"sometimes gets tired of being all by himself, sometimes I think he wants some closeness."* She also stated that *"I would not want other people to see [our family] as being separate"*, and that she would, *"rather have Steve more involved and closer to the family."* In fact, she said that she has *"a vision of the family all lined up arm and arm, shoulder to shoulder like the Superfriends, each with our strengths, but all together as a team."* Additionally, Mrs. Smith indicates her belief that recreation can play an important role in bringing the family together. She related her *"ultimate vision"* for the family is that, *"at some point we all like pack up our backpacks and water bottles and take off for a bicycle day just riding seeing how far we can go, seeing everything from that view rather than a car window."*

Challenges. When Mrs. Smith was asked whether or not she enjoys the time that her family spends together in leisure activities, she replied, *"Uh huh, I think so."* Some of her apparent lack of enthusiasm may stem from the fact that she is generally the person in this family who is responsible for organizing and planning such activities. In relation to her role in family activities, she stated that, *"I don't know if it is my job but that is what I do, now if I ask Mr. Smith specifically...but I mean really in my family I am the cattle prod and everything it seems. I kind of try to bridge a lot of different people and personalities and ideas."*

She also reported that there a lot of times that she and Mr. Smith will not do some of the things that they want to do because they know that the children are not going to like the activities that the parents would choose. She does; however, enjoy playing

games with the children although it is difficult for her to get past *“thinking that I need to do this, that I need to catch up in this area.”*

She acknowledged that on the evenings that Mr. Smith and the boys go to the church for their activities, she *“enjoy[s] the time to myself and will usually sit back, relax, and watch TV.”* Although she enjoys her individual time away from the family, she initiates and participates in a number of family activities. She also believes that she and Mr. Smith need to take more time together to strengthen their marital relationship. She indicated that she would like to spend her leisure on occasion, by herself, with her husband, and with the family so that she can feel *“like a person again and not just somebody's mom, and that Mr. Smith and I need to be a married couple and not just somebody's parents.”* She believes that an increase in time spent in recreation and leisure activities with her husband, and with the family as a whole would have a very positive impact on the relationships between family members.

When questioned about potential obstacles to their participation in family activities, all family members agreed that their greatest obstacle would have to be time. Mrs. Smith reported that family members *“do not have any differences that are extreme enough to present a real obstacle.”* The most commonly reported obstacles included *“getting everyone to try and decide on a common thing, little emotional conflicts, and energy.”* Health also seemed to be an important obstacle for this family. Steve and Kent both reported that the boys tend to participate by themselves while Mr. and Mrs. Smith sit back and watch. Mrs. Smith also noted that the fact that she and Mr. Smith are *“getting older and being heavier”* plays an important role in limiting their participation in family

activities. Mr. Smith also has had some problems with his knee that have forced him to take a less physically active role in the family.

Adaptability

Flexibility. Each member of the Smith family seems to have a well-defined role in the functioning of the family. All of the children agree that Mr. and Mrs. Smith are the ones who make the decisions for the family. Kent stated that when it comes to decision-making, *"the kids have no say, so it is basically mom and dad that talk it over."* Mrs. Smith is the one who initiates most family activities and makes sure that all of the children have an opportunity to do something that they enjoy. She stated that when there are a lot of ideas about where to go and what to do, *"I try to take a little bit from everyone if possible, and if not to go with one [person] one time, and then the next one gets a turn."* Mr. Smith is *"the sheriff"* and tends to be the one who administers punishments and *"makes sure that everyone stays in line."*

While the parents tend to be the ones who make the decisions in the family, Steve has a great deal of influence and power within the family. When he was asked who was responsible for making sure that everyone gets ready for an activity, he replied, *"in process, I'm the one that moves the balls in this family."* Kent pointed out that on many occasions when the family is deciding what to do, that *"Steve usually gets to do what he wants and me and Tim are like whatever, and are just in it to have fun."*

Although members of the Smith family generally agree that joint participation in leisure activities would be beneficial to their family, they have found that changing their family patterns can be extremely challenging. Mr. Smith stated that although he tries to

"put all of the work aside and just kick back, [he] usually ends up putting the fun on the back burner and gradually going back into that work mode." As it is with many people, the daily tasks involved with making a living and maintaining the operations of the family take up the majority of the available time that could be used for shared family activities. As Mrs. Smith stated, *"it is real hard for me to have fun when I have tons of work waiting for me."*

Although time may limit the number and duration of the activities that the Smith family enjoys together, other obstacles may have more of an impact. One such obstacle may be that the family members are not so dissatisfied with their current situation that they are motivated enough to put forth the effort required to make changes. For example, Steve mentioned that although he often enjoys the time that the family spends together, *"I most of the time like the comfort of my nice sheltered room."* Similarly, Mr. Smith stated *"I try not to make any kind of plans you know because, in the past I made plans to do something then something over here comes up then you've already got this planned and you have got to drop this to do this."* Mr. Smith seems to be so uncomfortable with the idea of change, that he has gotten to the point where he does not even make plans. Both he and Steve seem comfortable enough with their current situation that they put forth little effort to make any changes.

Family activities also tend to be somewhat unorganized and individual based. As Mr. Smith reported, when the family goes *"to the park or something, Kent and Tim pretty much do what they want together and Steve goes off on his own adventuring."* Once the family arrives at their destination, the children do what they want to do, and Mr. and Mrs. Smith sit back and watch the children. While each family member reported that they

enjoy the time that they spend on such occasions, the limited interaction between family members also minimizes the positive impact on the family as a unit.

Although family activities tend to be somewhat separate in nature, most of the members of this family seem to be comfortable with this style and are not highly motivated to change. However, this family system does seem to be somewhat flexible when faced with change. With respect to family recreation, Mr. Smith indicated that *"if we fit it in so be it. If it happens it happens if it don't we just go on."* Moreover, when asked whether or not their family activities are planned or whether they occur at random, he replied, *"it is about 50/50. Sometimes we say we are going to do this and other times it just happens on the spur of the moment."* Also, most family members indicated that they usually enjoy family activities whether they are planned, or occur more randomly.

A comparison of the pre and post intervention FACES III scores (figure 3) for adaptability seems to indicate a shift in the way that the Smith family deals with change (Figure 4). While all of the scores fell within the middle ranges of the Circumplex model, most family members seemed to perceive a substantial difference in the way that their family responds to and deals with change. Mr. Smith and Steve's scores for adaptability declined considerably indicating that they believe the family is moving toward a more structured means of dealing with change. Although his pre and post intervention scores were identical, Kent's scores also fell within the structured range on the Circumplex model. However, Mrs. Smith and Tim's scores increased considerably and indicate a shift toward a more chaotic means of dealing with change. Although their perceptions differ as to the exact nature of the change, they seem to agree that the family has in some way altered its reaction to change.

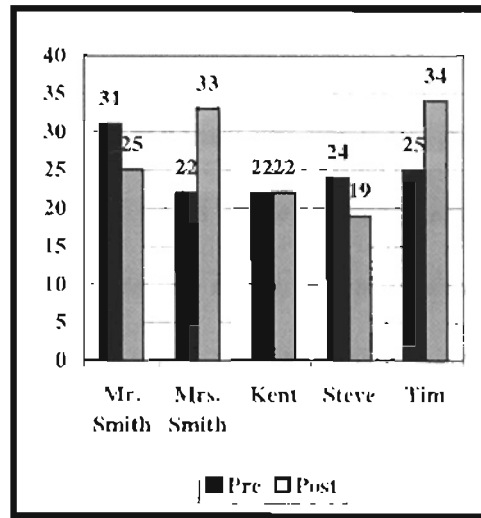
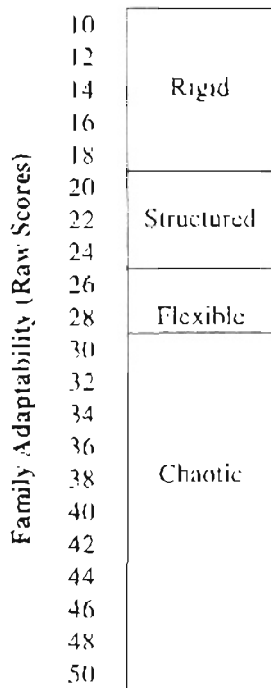


Figure 4: Smith Family Adaptability

Stress. For the Smith family, recreation also appears to be a very effective means of coping with the stressors in their daily lives. As a stress reducer, family recreation seems to provide family members with freedom from the stress producing elements of their lives. Mr. Smith stated that “[family recreation] *relieves the tension, especially on bad days when the kids have been in the house forever and they finally get to go out...I think the kids’ attitudes change, the simple fact that they are getting to go out and do stuff, then Mrs. Smith and I can just sit back and go whew.*” Apparently the change in the routine and the break from the norm allows the children to release some of their energy. Mr. and Mrs. Smith then are able to take a break from the pressures of managing the family

The children also seem to believe that family recreation is an effective means of stress reduction. Steve reported that “[family recreation] *helps most of the time, but*

sometimes there are some little conflicts..." and family recreation may serve to intensify the conflicts. Kent believes that family recreation helps to *"reduce tension in the family because you can get out there and let everything go, you can let stress go, it takes your mind of the stress and it just goes, and after you are done you are like man I feel good."* Similarly, Tim stated that he thinks family recreation helps *"relieve stress because we are together and we are having more fun than just like staying home, we can get away from all the stress so we can just forget about it and have fun."* The time spent together in recreation and leisure seems to provide family members with an opportunity to *"refresh"* themselves from the challenges that they face, and serves to break down some of the separation between family members.

While Mrs. Smith believes that family recreation can provide a positive outlet for stress reduction, she also identified some additional benefits of engaging in activities as a family. For example, *"I think you get to know everybody a little bit better, I mean a little more about each other's personalities and maybe about who is strong in this area and who is strong in that area and who is going to need a little bolstering up in one area or the other."* She believes that time spent with her family allows her to better understand their needs and how to more effectively support them. She reported that this increased awareness of each other increases each person's ability to help each other *"through the rough spots."*

Frequency and Satisfaction

As was mentioned earlier in this paper, the Smith family is similar to many families in that their family recreation tends to take place after all of the work is

completed. The work that *"has to be done"* commonly takes precedence over the fun. As Mrs. Smith said, *"A lot of times...it is kind of on the back burner. If you get to it, it comes after you get the work done and the schoolwork done, the grocery shopping and the laundry, the yard work and all that."* As a result, family activities tend to take place at certain times on certain days and the frequency of family activities is necessarily tied to work and school schedules.

Frequency. Due to Mr. Smith's work schedule, the Smith's activities are generally limited to the weekends and early evenings. In addition, Mrs. Smith works during the day while the children are at school and is very involved in their church with a number of activities. The commitments that she has made to the church also keep her out of the home on *"four out of seven evenings of the week... and the fifth I am gone in the afternoons."* The hectic schedules of Mr. and Mrs. Smith require that most of the family time occurs on the weekends.

During the week, the most common activities are watching TV and playing video games. Mrs. Smith stated that, *"these activities might occur daily for brief moments, we might watch the news together or pick a movie a couple of times a week."* Steve believes that such activities are more frequent and occur *"maybe once or twice every day."* While these activities occur on a daily basis, activities that include all family members in a more active experience take place less often. Mrs. Smith, Kent and Steve agree that these more involved family activities take place *"maybe once or twice a week depending on what other things may be going on."* However, Mr. Smith and Tim stated that such activities take place *"only two or three times in a month."*

Satisfaction. During the initial family interview, each family was asked to describe what family recreation was like in their family. Mrs. Smith replied that, "*We haven't had much fun, I don't think.*" In response to this comment, Steve quickly retorted, "*No, we have not.*" At this point, the family had been very involved in work and school. They had attempted to institute a game night each week when they would be able to spend regular time together, but for some reason "family game night" had not lasted. Their family recreation was somewhat limited and Steve had been in trouble at school and at home due to "*some bad things I have been into.*" In this section of the paper each member of the family are examined to ascertain their degree of satisfaction with family recreation.

When Mrs. Smith was asked if she enjoyed the time that the family spends together she replied, "*Uh huh, I think so.*" Clearly much of her uncertainty is related to her role as the family manager. On a separate occasion she was asked the same question and replied, "*I think really it depends on the mood that everyone is in, sometimes we might have two of us butting heads, as the boys have gotten older in a lot of ways they have gotten somewhat more cooperative with each other and then you have moments where they tread on each others toes and stuff.*" This statement seems to indicate that her satisfaction with family activities is tied to the experiences of the other family members. She is able to enjoy the time together when the children are happy, but when there are disagreements and arguments, she finds it much more difficult to enjoy the experience. The fact that she also tends to be the one who is most involved in attempting to smooth things over and make peace may also limit her satisfaction with the experience.

Mr. Smith reported that he is very satisfied with the time that the family is able to spend together. In the sessions he appeared to enjoy the activities and spending time with the family. The greatest obstacle to greater satisfaction with family recreation may be his health. At the beginning of the sessions Mrs. Smith mentioned that he had had some trouble with his knee and that he was probably "*heading for surgery.*" Over the course of the study, he injured his knee again and his mobility was severely limited as a result. Mrs. Smith reported "*he is having so many health problems, I don't know if he is really enjoying anything out of the ordinary right now. I think sometimes he does, but I'm sure a lot of the time he probably goes along to help me with the kids and he is the driver.*"

For the most part, Kent and Tim seem to enjoy spending time with the family. Steve generally gains more satisfaction from the time that he spends on his own than the time that he spends with the family. Kent reported that when they decide to do something as a family, Steve "*doesn't agree easily, but me and Tim are like cool, let's go. But Steve wants to stay home and do stuff in his own little world.*" Mrs. Smith believes that "*the kids enjoy doing things together as long as I pick something they enjoy like movies, bowling, skating, swimming or something.*" In the sessions Kent and Tim readily participated in most of the activities and appeared to be enjoying themselves regardless of the activity. However, Steve often refused to participate when the activity was not appealing to him, or he had something else on his mind.

Experience of Leisure Education Sessions

Each family member was asked to identify the skills or topics from the sessions that they believed were the most helpful to them individually and collectively. The

comments of each family member will be discussed individually to highlight the main areas in which each family benefited from the sessions. Responses relating to any changes in the frequency and satisfaction of family recreation and leisure will be grouped together to provide an overall picture of the family as a whole.

Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith identified two basic ideas that had made an important difference in her relationships with other family members and overall family functioning. First, she believes that the sessions have helped her to focus on her family. She stated that the sessions had helped her to *"realize how much we need to strengthen our family, the sessions made us stop and focus on our family and I think that will be good for us in the long run and it already has been."* After a discussion of coping skills she noticed that, *"I had committed myself so much to church and friend activities that four out of seven evenings of the week I was gone, and the fifth I am gone in the afternoons. It was no wonder, you know, that some people were getting angry at me, I wasn't around that much, and also, that I didn't have much energy left to give, and I have actually started turning down some things. People ask, 'will you do this, will you join this' and I have started to say no, I am not taking on anything new right now."*

The second area that she believes has helped her family is the emphasis on communication skills. She reported that the sessions *"really did make us aware of how often we would be thinking...that the other person knew exactly where we were going with a thought or an idea and how you might not even be remotely near each other on it, and I think that maybe we have gotten somewhat clearer, at least Mr. Smith and I, about wanting to be more sure of what the other might mean."* She also has made a concerted attempt to take the time to listen to her children in order to better understand their

reasoning and motivation. On one occasion Kent had asked to do something and *“we had just came down on him like the proverbial ton of bricks no, no, no and then it hit me all of the sudden, you know instead of just saying that why not ask him why did you want to do that? Why is that important to you?”* As an additional example, in an attempt to communicate more clearly with her children, she *“left them a note describing the chores that she would like them to do rather than just telling them what she wanted them to do.”* She stated that usually *“half the stuff would get forgotten and I would come home feeling angry because I would be thinking now look I got all this arranged and organized for you and you didn’t utilize it while I was gone.”* However, on this occasion, they followed the plan and did it and the result was much more pleasurable for everyone.

While a focus on the family and improved communication skills were identified as the most important things that she learned, she also reported that the idea that family recreation does not have to cost a lot of money, and that staying home and *“playing board games could be just as good or even better”* was also something valuable that she learned.

When Mrs. Smith’s FACES III scores were plotted on the Circumplex model (figure 3), her pre intervention scores indicated that she viewed the family as being structurally connected. Her post intervention scores changed drastically from the balanced range to chaotically connected in the midrange of the model. While she seems to believe that the connection between family members has slightly increased, she seems to perceive a drastic increase in the family’s ability to change rules, roles, and power structure within the family in response to stressful situations.

Mr. Smith. Similar to Mrs. Smith, Mr. Smith identified the communication skills as the most important thing that he and his family had learned from the sessions. He reported that his participation in the leisure education session has helped him to become more aware of how the members of the family communicate with one another. He stated that *“you go through something like this and different things come out that you didn’t even think about, you know that paraphrasing, clarification, you know you never think about it, it was interesting.”* Furthermore, he reported that he believes that these skills have helped family members understand each other better.

Mr. Smith also mentioned that the structure of the sessions was very helpful to him. *“What was really interesting was seeing how the other people function I guess, seeing how their family runs as opposed to how our family works, that was really interesting.”* The opportunity to observe other families and to compare their way of doing things with that of his own family provided him with a more complete understanding that there can be a number of ways to deal with the challenges that they face. This perception seems to be supported by his responses to the FACES III questionnaire.

The Circumplex model of Marital and Family Systems is divided into three ranges. The range within the center circle of the model is the balanced range of family functioning, and represents more functional marital and family systems. The next range of the model is the midrange and is located between the two circular areas of the model. The outermost regions of the model are the extreme ranges and represent the least functional to individual and family development. On the Circumplex model, Mr. Smith’s

scores changed from 'chaotically separated' at the pre intervention administration, to 'flexibly separated' at the post intervention administration (figure 5).

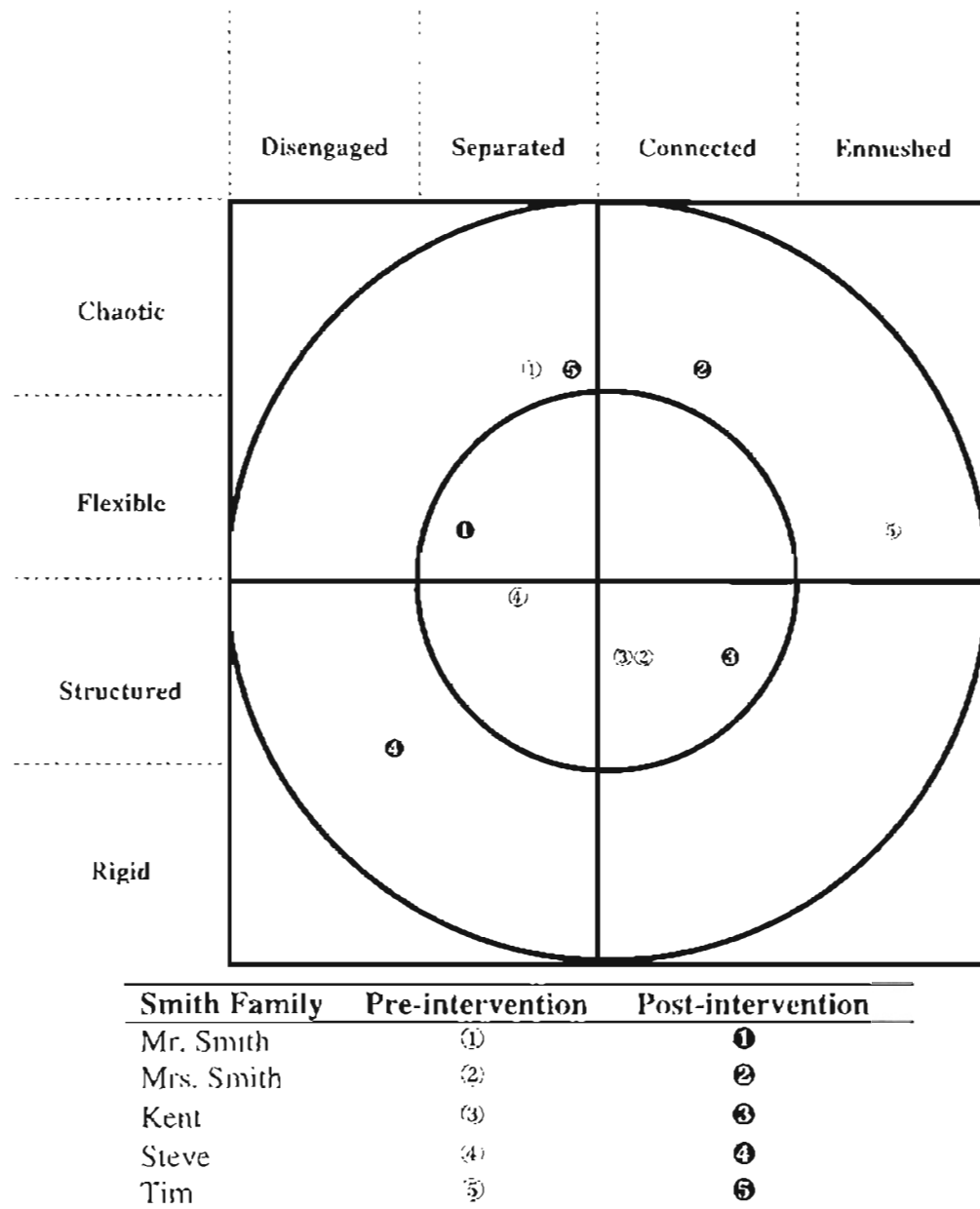


Figure 5: Smith Family Circumplex Model

the most helpful skills that they had learned, each of the three boys identified other skills as being more helpful to them. Kent reported that the coping skills were very helpful for his family because "Dad has had a lot less stress, I have had more stress." During the

coping skills session, Kent was very involved and discussed several decisions that he would have to make about current issues in his life. He stated that, *"the [coping skills] should really help me to decide what to do this summer, maybe get rid of some stress."* He also stated that he believes that the problems that his father has had with his knee that have made other areas of his life more difficult and stressful. Kent also mentioned that *"the last session"* (leisure planning skills) had been very helpful to his family because *"we have done a lot of things that we haven't done in years."* On the Circumplex model, Kent's pre and post scores remained within the 'structurally connected' range.

Steve also did not mention the communication skills. He identified *"the problem solving method"* (brainstorming) as being the most important session for him personally. He stated that *"up till when you started with the problem solving...I was in a lot of bad things, I am now clean and a few of the bad guys are gone."* While the specific problems that he has been dealing with were not disclosed, he identified the problem solving skills as being instrumental in helping him to deal with some of the difficulties he was working through. A comparison of his pre and post FACES III scores indicate that he believes the family to have become 'structurally disengaged.' He seems to believe that family relationships have become less cohesive, and that the roles and rules have become somewhat more rigid and unchanging.

Similarly, Tim also believes that the brainstorming skills have been the most helpful to his family. Although he agreed with Steve that the problem solving skills were the most beneficial, his reasoning was very different. He stated that *"when we had to not think about whether it cost too much money and just write down as many things as we could think of, everybody got a chance to say their ideas."* Overall, Tim's FACES III

score indicate the most drastic amount of change within the family. His pre session scores indicated that he viewed the family as being 'flexibly enmeshed.' However, his post session scores placed the family within the 'chaotically separated' range of the Circumplex model. His scores indicate that his beliefs about the family structure have significantly changed over the course of the project.

Frequency. When the boys were asked whether or not they were doing more together now than before the sessions, they all agreed that they are spending more time together now than before the sessions. Steve reported that the family "*has actually been doing quite a bit together.*" While Kent and Tim also believe that they are doing more together, they both stated that they are only doing, "*a little bit more.*" Mr. Smith also agreed that they were doing more together, but "*it is more often just the simple fact that it is the holidays.*" The fact that the sessions came to a conclusion during the first week in December may have contributed to the increase in the frequency of family recreation.

Other Variables. In addition to questions regarding the frequency of family activities, each family member was asked questions regarding any change in the kinds of activities they engage in, changes in the times that they get together, and changes in who participates in the activities. Mr. Smith indicated that family activities are "pretty much the same" as those engaged in prior the project. Similarly, Tim reported, "*sometimes we try new things, but mostly we do the same things because everybody pretty much likes the same things.*" However, Tim also stated that they had gone to a movie together which was something that they had not done for a long time. Furthermore, Kent indicated that they "*have done a lot of things that we haven't done in years,*" and Steve added they were doing "*more of the new things, like the movie, we've never been to a movie for quite a*

while.” Finally, Steve added that “we have actually spent many more visits to the park and I am starting to star gaze on that hill.”

All of the family members mentioned that because the work and school schedules had not changed, the times that they participated in family activities also had not changed. Moreover, each of the family members indicated that the large majority of their recreation included only members of the family and on occasion, the extended family.

The Young Family

The second family in this study will be referred to as the Young family. The Young family consists of two members; Ms. Young is a single mother, and her only child, Emily, is fifteen.

As a single mother, Ms. Young fills many roles in this family. She works a full-time job during the week and each night comes home to fill the roles of mother and homemaker. Her schedule is extremely hectic and as a result she has very little time for family or individual recreation. In addition, in the last year or two she has had some health problems that have made her life much more difficult. Last year she learned that her thyroid gland had “*shut down*”, leaving her with very little energy. She had also quit smoking approximately five months prior to this study and reported that she is “*much more tired all the time.*” Between her busy schedule and the lack of energy caused by her health problems, Ms. Young has not had much of an opportunity to get out and meet other people.

The stress and pressures of her life seem to have made the task of finding enjoyment through recreation very difficult for Ms. Young. When she was asked if she

and Emily have similar interests, Ms. Young identified a number of activities that Emily enjoys that “*I used to like...when I was younger, but its like it is just gone from me. I guess that I’m not a child anymore.*” While a lack of energy and a busy schedule play a very important role in inhibiting her enjoyment of, and participation in recreation, fear also seems to be an important factor. She stated that “*the world outside is a little frightening too. Someone could just drive by and shoot you.*” Fear of trying something new, of meeting new people, and of the unknown in general seems to limit the number and frequency of new things that she is able to try. On a number of occasions during the sessions, she would seem uncertain about something, she would wait until someone helped her, or the situation had changed.

Throughout the course of this study, Ms. Young was the voice for this family. Emily rarely spoke, and when she did Ms. Young was always there to help her and to clarify what she had said. According to Ms. Young, Emily has some difficulty reading and understanding what she has read. As a result of her obvious discomfort, Emily declined to complete the FACES questionnaire or the individual interview. Similar to her mother, when Emily was faced with a situation that she was not comfortable with, she would wait until someone (usually her mother) would provide her with some assistance. Due to her reluctance to speak, much of the information about Emily is taken from statements made by her mother, a careful observation of her actions during the sessions, and her own simple responses to direct closed-ended questions. Some of her reluctance to speak may have been partially induced by the presence of audio and video recording equipment. Emily rarely spoke when she was aware of the presence of the recording equipment. However, when she became more involved in an activity or when the

equipment was turned off, she became somewhat more vocal and would joke with the others in the room.

Cohesion

Ms. Young stated that she believes that family recreation “*brings us closer together, we laugh and smile together and just have a good time and everything else is just off of our mind.*” She believes that doing things together strengthens her relationship with her daughter because it “*helps us to be able to communicate, with the TV off, and...that is when we can talk and communicate. I want communication in the family and we haven't had a lot of it lately but when we do get these things [recreation] together we have it.*” The fact that their most common ‘shared’ activity includes Emily playing computer games while Ms. Young watches television highlights the importance of leisure activities for this family. In the words of Ms. Young, “*when we spend time together without any interference we have time to talk and listen, when I am watching a show it is like wait a minute until a commercial.*” Apparently their most common activities do not allow a great deal of room for interpersonal communication. However, when they do take the time to communicate effectively with one another, they seem to benefit by “*just getting to know one another and know what is going on.*”

In addition to the increase in communication that takes place when they do things together, both Ms. Young and Emily seem to sincerely enjoy the time and the activities that they do together. Ms. Young reported that when “*we go to the lake together, visit our family, stay down [at the lake] on the weekends, go to garage sales or yard sales together, it is fun for us.*” After a discussion of the kinds of activities that they share, she

reaffirmed that she “*really enjoy[s] the times that we are able to spend together.*” When she was asked to describe specifically what she enjoyed about these times, she answered that she enjoys “*just doing things together, just getting out, having something to do.*” In order to further clarify her meaning, she added, “*for me it is both [being together] and [the activity], it is not just one or the other.*”

When Emily was asked directly if she enjoys the times that she spends with her mother, she clearly indicated that she does. Although she rarely spoke in the sessions, a number of examples serve to support the genuine nature of her response. In the third session dealing with family cohesion and compromise, the Young family was asked to participate in the “Game in a Bag” activity (appendix E). At the beginning of the activity, Ms. Young encouraged Emily to work with her to create a game. However, Emily seemed very reluctant to help and offered no assistance other than saying “*I don’t know*” when she was asked to share her ideas. This continued for approximately five to ten minutes until they were given some assistance. Both Ms. Young and Emily appeared to be very uncomfortable with their situation, but neither one developed any ideas. However, after they had been given a little assistance in developing some basic ideas, they quickly created a game and played it together several times. After the activity, Emily stated that she liked the game that they had made, and that “*I thought it was fun.*” Moreover, she reported that she and her mother had “*worked together well*” to create the game. Even in a situation that was clearly uncomfortable, Emily was still able to enjoy the time spent with her mother.

Emily was completely uninvolved in the final session of the project. The following week she wrote a note indicating that she had not participated in the session

because *“I was very, very, very, very sad because it was the last Saturday of the program and I did not want the program to stop. [Even though] the program is over, I still want to come to the community center to play games because sometimes when I am at home I get bored and I don’t have anything to do.”* Over the course of the program she had had weekly opportunities to spend time with her mother. After the sessions were completed, those opportunities to spend time with her mother were no longer available, and some of her sadness at the end of the project could have been related to the idea that she would miss that opportunity in the future.

Although both Ms. Young and Emily enjoy the times that they spend together, most of the time *“[Emily] is usually doing her thing, and I am doing mine.”* As was mentioned earlier, this description is representative of the majority of their shared family activities. However, this pattern does not seem to be limited to their evenings at home during the week. Ms. Young reported that there are times when Emily does not want to go to the lake either. However, *“she changes into a better mood once we get there. She goes straight to my dad’s computer and then she is happy.”* Apparently several of their weekend activities tend to consist of more separate activities.

This apparent separateness was also evident during a number of the sessions. On several occasions Ms. Young and Emily were asked to participate in the activities on separate teams. Although their involvement was generally limited in relation to the other families, *“when Ms. Young and Emily are in different groups, they are laughing and having a good time.”* Journal entries following the Problem Solving session indicate, *“Ms. Young and Emily seem to enjoy recreation more when they are part of a larger group than just their own family. Tonight they both laughed a lot, and although their*

direct participation was still limited, they seemed to enjoy the activities.” Again following the Leisure Planning Skills session (this session preceded the Coping skills session for this family) journal entries indicated that in the family activities, Emily did very little in the way of participation. However, when they were placed on separate teams Emily became “*much more involved and animated.*” In many ways, both Ms. Young and Emily were more involved and seemed more comfortable in larger groups than as a family.

Although Ms. Young and Emily seem to somewhat indifferent about the time that they spend together, in many ways they are very dependant on one another. Ms. Young’s

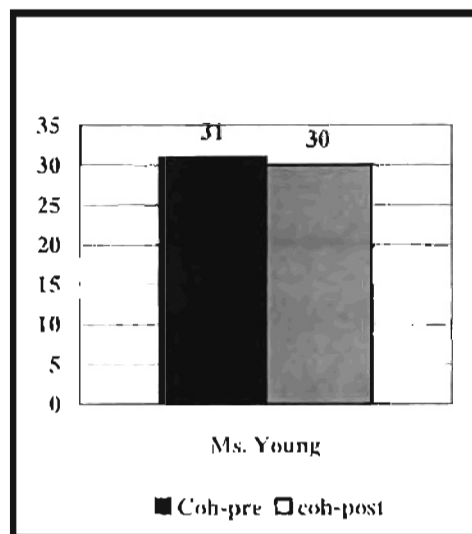


Figure 6: Ms. Young Cohesion

scores on the FACES III instrument (figure 6) for cohesion indicated that she views her family as being separated. However, her scores fall within the balanced range on the Circumplex model. Furthermore, Emily is very dependant on her mother in a variety of situations. There were numerous occasions during the sessions when Emily would seem very unsure about what to say or do, and she would wait until her mother would jump in and speak for her or do something to help her. Ms. Young is very good at helping Emily out of difficult situations. The second administration of the FACES III instrument indicated very little change.

On occasions when they go somewhere or do something, Ms. Young stated that, *"I am the one who plans [the activity], and then I ask Emily if she has any ideas."* At the same time, Emily relies on her mother to make many decisions for her. For example, on the weekends that they go to the lake, Ms. Young will *"just let [Emily] know that we are going that weekend and we get the house cleaned and leave."* Furthermore, when they are going somewhere, Ms. Young *"pack[s] Emily's] clothes and stuff for her."* However, *"Emily is responsible for packing the stuff she wants to take to listen to, her CD player, and her Gameboy."* Emily makes sure that the things that she wants to do are prepared for, but she relies on her mother to pack her clothes.

In many ways, Emily mirrors actions of her mother. There were also a number of occasions during the sessions when Ms. Young seemed very unsure about what to do. For example, during the 'Game in a Bag' activity Ms. Young and Emily had a very difficult time developing an idea for a game. Their frustration began to build and Emily offered little if any help. Without any input from Emily, Ms. Young simply sat there and waited. After a few minutes, they were given a few suggestions and they were able to

develop their game very quickly. In this instance, when she did not know what else to do, she waited until someone else gave her some assistance. This pattern of waiting for assistance was repeated a number of times throughout the process of the sessions by both Emily and Ms. Young. Every activity that they were asked to do together seemed to be very difficult for them at the beginning. They would struggle for a few minutes until they were given a little direction, and then they tended to work together very well.

The members of the Young family also seem to rely upon each other away from the sessions as well. Ms. Young also reported that when she is under a lot of stress from the demands of her job, Emily is generally very helpful. She will tell Emily *"about [her] situation and the source of [her] stress so that [Emily] does not worry and think that she is the cause of the problem."* Then Emily will *"tickle me or something, kind of play with me and help me get my mind off of it."* Apparently Emily helps to provide a distraction or escape from the stress so that Ms. Young can get away from the pressure for a while. Ms. Young also relies heavily on Emily for her interpersonal connection. When she was asked if she participated in activities with friends, Ms. Young replied, *"I don't know people or have any friends. I just have family."*

Challenges. The Young family faces a number of challenges to their participation in family recreation and leisure. First, Ms. Young has indicated that she and Emily have different interests. She enjoys watching television and Emily enjoys being outside *"riding bikes and skating."* Ms. Young used to enjoy those things when she was younger, but now that she is older and health concerns and her day-to-day responsibilities have increased, *"it's like it is just gone from me."*

During the Self-Awareness session, Ms. Young completed that Teen LeisureScope activity which identified her principal leisure interest as being out in nature. Additionally, the worksheet identifies a *“feeling of relief and escape”* as being her primary motivation for participation in leisure activities. However, due to her health problems and hectic schedule, such relief and escape is more readily available on the television.

In addition to the different interests expressed by the family members, Ms. Young’s health has also become an obstacle to an increase in family recreation and leisure. Her thyroid problems have depleted her energy and *“it has been like this for a really long time and it has got me really messed up, and that is when things changed...and I have been sick since last year.”* However, she reported that when her health issues have been resolved, she *“hope[s] to have the energy and strength just to do things again.”*

In addition to the difficulty that she has had with her health, Ms. Young also has a great deal of stress associated with being a single mother of a child with some learning disabilities. On weekdays, *“between work and going to the grocery store and getting this and that done and getting home, there just isn’t any time. We get home, get everything done, shower, and go to bed.”* However, based on their participation in the sessions and their actions toward one another, they seem to be very interested in getting closer to one another, but are very cautious about making any changes. They have both asserted on a number of occasions that they enjoy the time that they spend together. Emily stated, *“I enjoy being together and having a good time.”* Similarly, Ms. Young reported, *“yeah I do enjoy doing activities together.”* However, in their current situation neither seems to

be interested in initiating more frequent activities. Ms. Young indicated that, "*We don't really try that hard,*" and "*as it gets cold weather we stay home a lot more and we don't really go places.*" Even during the sessions they would generally wait for someone else to initiate the activities and then they would gradually increase their participation as they began to feel more comfortable.

Much of their hesitation to participate and to try new things also seems to be related to a feeling of apprehension about unfamiliar situations and individuals. At one point during the sessions, Ms. Young was discussing the question of whom she participates in recreation and leisure activities with. In response, she stated, "*See that is my problem, getting out there being around people and talking with them. Unless I get to know them it is really hard for me to do, so I just stand around like a wall. It is just hard for me to go up to people and talk to them and they say hi to me...and that is pretty much how it stays.*" Not only does meeting new people present a challenge to Ms. Young, she also expressed trepidation about her surroundings. The fear expressed by Ms. Young combined with the responsibilities of work, being a single mother, and her health problems present major challenges to family recreation for this family.

Adaptability

Structure. In the Self-Awareness session the participants were asked to select from a list, an object that represented the way that they most commonly see themselves. Emily replied that she was a "*football, because you never know which way I will bounce.*" Ms. Young indicated that she was a "*wheelbarrow because I only go when pushed.*" However, she added, "*When I am stressed I am like a balloon because you*

never know when I might pop.” While the images of a balloon and a football may give an impression of chaos, the Young family seems to be somewhat more structured. Ms. Young’s FACES III scores for adaptability prior to the leisure education sessions fell within the lower portion of the flexible range. Her post session adaptability scores were

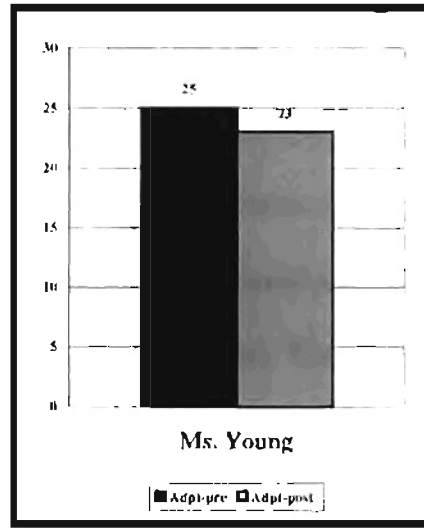


Figure 7: Ms. Young Adaptability

slightly lower (see figure 7) and fell within the upper portion of scores in the structured range.

Over the course of the project, Ms. Young and Emily seemed to demonstrate a consistent pattern of participation and interaction. Careful observation of this family over the first several sessions revealed that Ms. Young and Emily seem to do as little as they possibly can to get by. However, when they are asked to work as a family or are given specific instructions they are able to accomplish the goals of the session. This may be their way of getting by as easily as possible, they do what is required and little more. This pattern also seems to represent their approach to life in general. They do only what they must for survival and the rest (including recreation) takes place only when it is somehow introduced into their lives for them by other family members or through these

sessions. In the final interview, Ms. Young reported that, "*when we come to these sessions, we have [time together].*" She also indicated that their only vacation, "*was two years ago, and that was planned by my sister.*" Ms. Young's health, and the stress of their lives seem to leave them with little energy left over for play.

When they were asked to work as a family during the sessions, they had a difficult time getting started. However, once they were given a little direction, they worked together very well. During the final session (Leisure Planning Skills) they were asked to identify Leisure resources using the brainstorming method. In this activity they were placed on a team and team members were asked to make a suggestion on their given turn. The added structure seemed to help Ms. Young and Emily to join in a little more. Emily made a number of suggestions on her turns in situations where she had remained silent in previous sessions. Apparently, knowing when it would be her turn to speak and having time to prepare a short answer were very helpful to her.

Outside of the sessions, they seem to function more effectively when their lives are more structured. Ms. Young indicated that she is generally "*the one who makes the decisions at home about what to do, and when it has to be done.*" With respect to family activities, Ms. Young stated that, "*I guess it is my move, what I feel like doing. I know what she likes to do. I decide [what we will do based on] if we have the money...if there are not any plans that weekend, or if we are just at the house and we have got the money then I will say let's just go eat, you know, just a spur of the moment thing.*" As she indicated, although Ms. Young is commonly the one who decides what to do, there also seems to be some flexibility and spontaneity involved in the decision.

Stress. The Young family also seems to use recreation and leisure as a means of relieving the stress in their lives. When they were asked how they commonly deal with stress in their lives, Ms. Young stated, *"I try not to think about it, put my mind else where or do the [relaxed] breathing."* Emily reported that she will *"go to my room and just lay down or play a game on the computer"* when she is feeling stressed. Additionally, they both agreed that *"doing things together"* was a very important means of dealing with stress. Ms. Young reported that their time together helps to relieve stress because, *"we support one another, pretty much she supports me by saying it is all right, you know, and just hearing that helps."* Emily will also help her mother when she is stressed by *"tickling her or playing with her."* Ms. Young believes that playing with Emily helps to *"keep my mind off of the problems and helps me to relax a little bit."* She also reported that when she is feeling stressed, she will *"make sure to let Emily know the reason for the stress so that she does not believe that she is the reason for the situation."*

Frequency and Satisfaction

Both Ms. Young and Emily stated that they enjoy doing things together when they have the time. However, they also reported that they *"spend most of their time at home doing what needs to be done"* during the week, leaving the weekends as the most common time for family recreation. However, the problems that Ms. Smith has had with her health during the last year has reportedly contributed to a drastic decline in the frequency of family activities.

Prior to the onset of the health problems, the family *"used to go to visit [extended] family at the lake on a lot a weekends"* but they currently only visit the lake about *"every*

three months." Another popular family activity has been attending garage sales together. They stated that they *"used to go to garage sales together every payday (bi-weekly), but now they only go about three to four times per year."* These two activities were reported to be the most common shared family activities before the decline in Ms. Young's health.

In addition to these activities, their local church has also provided them with some opportunity for shared activity. Ms. Young stated that she *"will sometimes attend church with Emily when I can, but sometimes its very hard for me."* Emily also enjoys attending the church on Wednesday nights to participate in a variety of activities with *"people her own age."*

During the week Emily and Ms. Young rarely engage in shared activities. They recently purchased a computer and Emily enjoys playing computer games while her mother watches TV. According to Ms. Young, this type of activity is almost a nightly experience during the week. Furthermore, they state that during these times there is very little interaction unless Emily *"needs some help on the computer and [Ms. Young] will try to help her with it."* Ms. Young believes that part of the reason that she and Emily do not do more together is due to their different interests. Ms. Young enjoys being *"inside, watching TV or cleaning, and [Emily] likes basketball, being outdoors, riding bikes, skating and all of that stuff."* Ms. Young further stated that they *"played when she was younger, but the things that [Emily] likes are just part of a new generation."* Even though she perceives a difference in their interests, Ms. Young has attempted to participate in some activities, such as rollerblading, that Emily enjoys.

Experience of Leisure Education Sessions

Ms. Young. When Ms. Young was asked to relate the skills and events from the sessions that were most helpful to her and her family, she referred to the Family Cohesion and Compromise session. During that activity she and Emily were given a paper sack full of random items that could be used to develop a game. Their task was to use those items and create a game that they would be willing to play together. This activity seemed to be very difficult for Ms. Young and Emily, and for a while they struggled to come up with some ideas, but they were unsuccessful. After approximately ten minutes without success, they were given a few simple suggestions that might prompt some new ideas. After this point, they quickly developed a game that they both enjoyed. In response to the question of what she learned from these sessions, she replied' *"playing that game that we came up with. I thought that it was pretty neat that we could come up with something like that and play it."* Her confidence in the ability of the family to generate new ideas increased with this small success in the session. In addition, she also indicated that she has been using the rhythmic breathing skills that we practiced in the Coping Skills session to help her to more effectively deal with the stress in her life.

While some of the skills from the sessions have been useful to Ms. Young, the activities that they engage in together have changed very little. *"except for the homework assignments. When we were doing that you know we did it at home, but other than that we just went back to doing the same thing. I guess just really trying to do things together is kind of hard since she has her things and I have mine. We don't really try that hard but I think it is something we need to do more often."*

This lack of effort was reflected in Ms. Young's scores on the FACES III

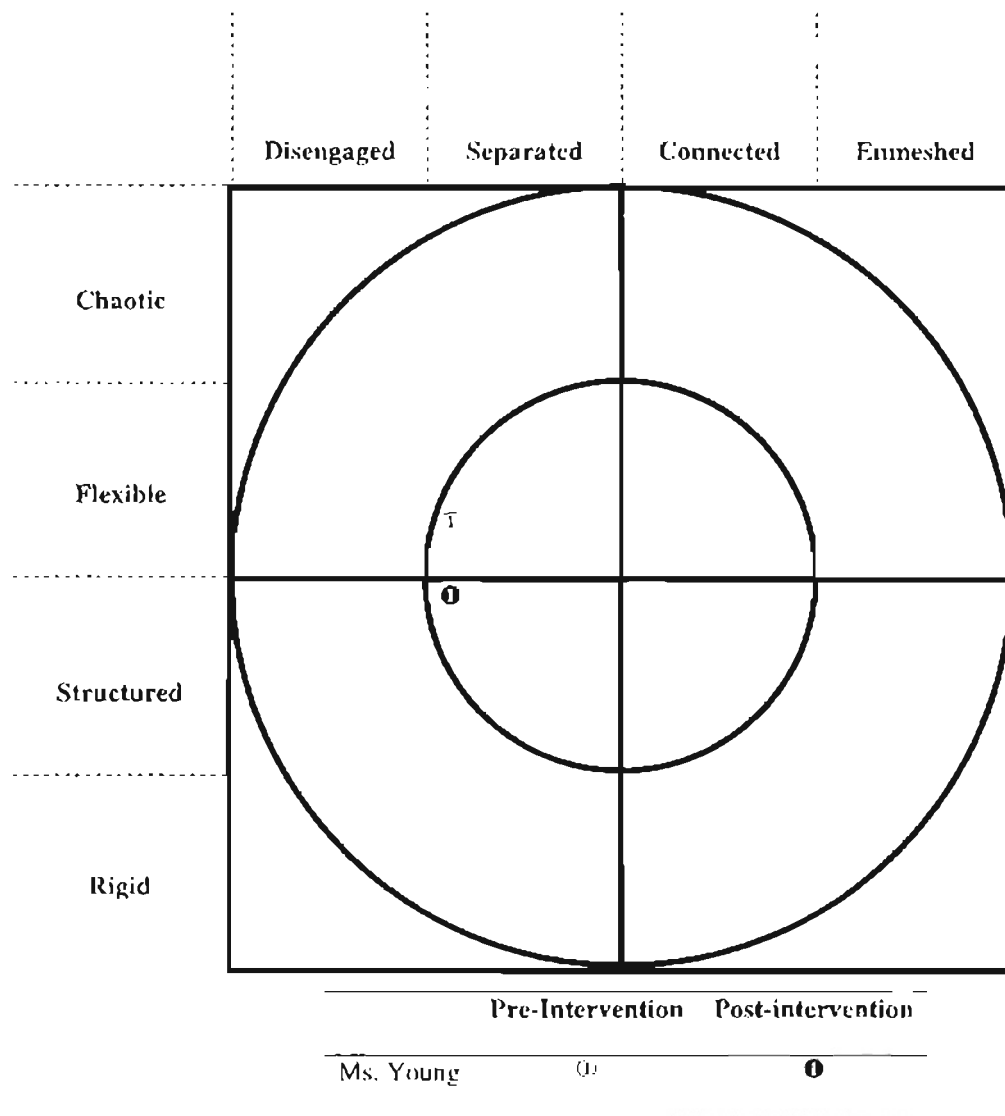


Figure 8: Ms. Young Circumplex Model

questionnaire. Her pre and post session scores did not identify much of a change in her perception of family functioning. However, both of her scores were within the balanced ranges of the Circumplex model (figure 8). Although she did not report any variation in the number or variety of family activities, Ms. Young did indicate that her interest in, and desire for an increase in shared family time. *“These [sessions] have made me think about [doing more things together], like getting back into church and stuff.”* Apprehension about meeting new people and health problems seem to be the greatest obstacles to

increased participation in family activities for Ms. Young.

Emily. Although Emily did not always seem outwardly enthused about the sessions, she clearly enjoyed the time that she spent in the program. In the note that she had written following the conclusion of the weekly sessions, she reported, "*I really had fun...and I did not want the program to stop. [Even though] the program is over I still want to come to the community center to play games.*" Although the exact source of her enjoyment is unclear, she clearly enjoyed the time spent in the sessions and wanted to continue to experience.

Frequency. Participation in the sessions also seems to have had a minimal impact on the frequency of family recreation and leisure. When they were asked if they are doing things together more often, Ms. Young replied that the frequency of their activities was "*about the same*" as prior to the program. She added, "*when were doing [the sessions], we did the homework at home and stuff, and other than that we just went back to doing the same thing.*" In many ways, the time that they spent in the sessions marked a drastic increase in the amount of time they spent together, involved in a shared activity.

The Taylor Family

The third family in the study will be referred to as the Taylor family. The Taylor family is a stepfamily and Mr. and Mrs. Taylor have been married for almost two years. The Taylor's have three children, Amy, Randy, and Mark. Amy and Randy are Mrs. Taylor's children from her previous marriage, and Mark is Mr. Taylor's son from his previous marriage. Mrs. Taylor and "*the children were by ourselves for eight years, so we were very much a family unit*" and now

they are *“working on blending the traditions of each of the families.”* In comparison with the other two families in the study, the Taylor’s are more affluent and have obtained a greater degree of education.

Mrs. Taylor is the family manager and is generally the first person to speak for the family. *“I feel like I am the peacemaker and the one to make everything go well and have everybody feel good.”* Although Mr. Taylor plans many of their activities, Mrs. Taylor *“makes sure that I get them dressed and ready to go.”* She takes the responsibility for many of the day-to-day activities of the family. Throughout the sessions, Mrs. Taylor was very quick to answer questions posed to the family. However, Mr. Taylor and the children were also very involved and spoke for themselves frequently. On a number of occasions Mrs. Taylor mentioned that her father was an alcoholic and that many of their family activities *“went badly...and vacations were usually quite disastrous because they always included drinking and people would get into fights.”* She indicated that these negative experiences have made it difficult for her to look forward to certain family activities without a certain degree of apprehension.

Mr. Taylor is the family planner and overseer. He seems to watch over the family and lets people do their own thing without permitting them stray too far. He is very involved in the family and seems to be very concerned with strengthening relationships within the family. He also enjoys being in control and planning family activities and vacations. For their last family vacation, he prepared a *“packet for each child...with a folder containing maps and locations where we are going. I enjoy sitting and figuring out where we are going to be*

and when we are going to be there.” Mr. Taylor was also very involved in the sessions and worked very well with the family. However, much of his interaction with the children goes through Mrs. Taylor. He tended to make comments to Mrs. Taylor and she would communicate more with the children.

Amy is the fifteen year-old daughter of Mrs. Taylor. She was often very quiet during the sessions, but was generally very involved and well spoken. She has a very close relationship with her mother and enjoys spending time with the family.

Twelve-year-old Randy is Amy's younger brother and Mrs. Taylor's youngest child. In the sessions he was generally very quiet and rarely spoke without being spoken to. However, he seemed to be very involved in the activities and was very compliant with the direction of his mother. He is also very interested in a variety of sports and has participated in baseball, basketball, and flag football.

Mark is Mr. Taylor's eleven-year-old son and is the youngest of the three children. He does not live with the family on a full-time basis, but visits every other weekend. He seems to get along with both Amy and Randy and was took a very active role in the sessions that he was able to attend with the family. He was only present for two sessions and was unable to participate in the interviews and did not complete the FACES III questionnaire.

Cohesion

Mrs. Taylor believes that family recreation has an important impact upon relationships between family members. She stated that “*[family recreation] totally influences [family relationships]. It is real important especially when it goes well, for instance we have gone bowling or that laser tag place, when we do something like that together and it has gone well there is a euphoric feeling about it and we feel like a family. I think that doing something with them is really important and you can really feel close, doing stuff as a family is really important, and I think that we enjoy it.*” In comparison to the other families in the study, the Taylor family spends a great deal of time together in recreational activities. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor believe that the time that they spend together is very important to the process of blending their two families into one. As Mrs. Taylor stated, “*I think since Amy, Randy and I have always been a family, we have certain things that we have always done together and then Mr. Taylor and I have done things separately, and now we are trying to blend those.*” Mr. Taylor indicated that he enjoys spending time as a family, and that “*relaxing and spending time with the family and doing something fun, having some fun as a family unit is what I like the most.*” Their desire to blend their families together is an important impetus for much of their shared family recreation.

The members of the Taylor family believe that participating in activities as a family provides them with a greater understanding of one another and helps them to learn more about becoming a family. Amy believes that Mr. Taylor benefits the most from their shared activity, “*because he hasn't really been in a family, like even though he has*

Mark, he really doesn't see him that much unless it is every other weekend. But I think it helps him have a better understanding of what an actual family is like." In agreement with Amy's assessment, Mr. Taylor stated, *"the more that you do together and the more situations that you are in you are going to learn more about each other and come to appreciate and know how to deal with each other better. Our situation, having an instant family and an instant closeness...you haven't literally grown up together...with the children, there is still a lot of figuring out and feeling out and trying to get to know each other even though we have known each other for a while. But you don't know anybody until you have lived with them."* Similarly, Mrs. Taylor suggested that shared family activities have helped her to get to know Mark better. *"It helps because he and I don't get a lot of time to interact so those are the occasions when we can. I have kind of been surprised at just a couple of times he has come to the group. I know that he is a very gregarious outgoing child, quite different from my son, and yet I'd never really seen him in kind of a leadership role. I've realized he is a leader and I learn a lot more about him in the family interactions."*

In addition to their regular weekly family activities, Mr. Taylor believes that their annual vacations provide the family with a unique opportunity to learn about one another. He stated, *"you learn more about people when you are in different situations and under different out of the ordinary demands, and obviously on a trip everyone has different responsibilities than they would at home and you have different tasks and going different places."* Clearly, the members of the Taylor family use their family activities as an opportunity to learn about one another and to strengthen their relationships with one another.

Their efforts are enhanced by the fact that the interests of the family members are very similar. Mr. Taylor indicated *“the things that we do we all enjoy doing so finding common ground I don't think is a problem for us. I think that we all pretty much like to do the same things and if we ordered one to five what we all like to do we may not be in the same order of priority but I bet our top five would be pretty close, except maybe going to the mall.”* Mrs. Taylor added, *“I haven't sensed any reluctance from any of us in coming together and doing stuff together. Which I know in other families that once they hit the teenage years they don't want to. But I haven't perceived the children wanting to drop out of the group activity.”* Although she has not noticed anyone wanting to spend more time away from the family, she does believe that Mr. Taylor *“would be the one to drop out. [He] tends to stay on [his] own more than the group does.”* He is the one member of their family that frequently spends time on his own. This may be due to the fact that he is attempting to adapt his lifestyle in an effort to join with an established family unit.

The FACES III scores for cohesion scored by the members of the Taylor family support the notion that they perceive their relationships with one another to be close (figure 9). Randy's cohesion score was the lowest at the initial administration. However, his score was within the balanced range of the Circumplex model. Additionally, his scores after the second administration fell within the connected range of the model. Amy's cohesion scores also increased at the second administration. However, her higher score indicated a shift in her perception of family relationships from 'connected,' to 'enmeshed.' On both occasions, all family members indicated that the relationships with one another are close.

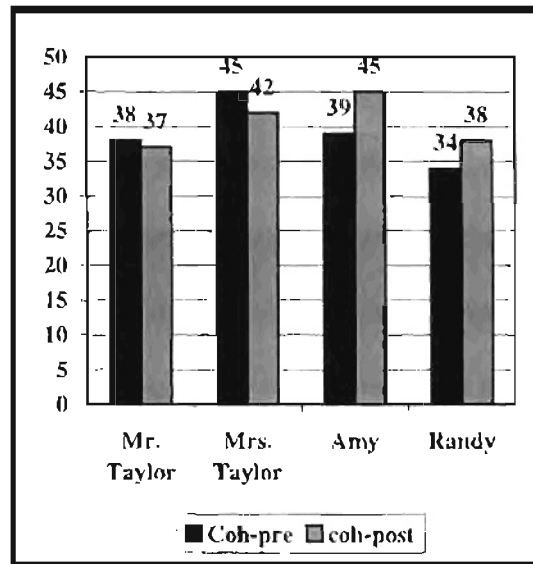


Figure 9: Taylor Family Cohesion

However, Mrs. Taylor believes that even though they have been married for almost two years, *“it is still very much that I have my two children that I do things with, and then when Mark comes we do everything as a family. In a lot of stepfamilies, the stepfathers tend to stay in their rooms a lot, kind of afraid to come out. So there is still a separateness in our family, and the children and I will do things, but Mr. Taylor will be in [another city] with Mark, so we have different activities that way.”* She also explained that because she was a single parent with her children for a number of years, she and the children *“were very much a family unit, very solid, just the three of us. So when we got married and moved into together there was a kind of awkwardness of having another head of the household, and he has all his different roles and routines and all that.”* Additionally, *“Sometimes family outings or family get-togethers are more stressful for me I think, because I watch it and try to smooth the way for everybody, and sometimes they just come off and they have just worked out wonderfully and we all feel close.”* As is the case with many families, the mother in this family is responsible for making sure that

family activities go well. In addition, the process of blending two families into one seems to enhance the level of stress for the mothers in this situation.

Although there is some separateness in the family, the members of the Taylor family believe that their relationships are enhanced by the times that they are able to spend together as a family. They seem to place a high value upon strengthening the bonds between family members. Mrs. Taylor indicated that having a strong family *"is very important to me. One of the reasons to get married is to have a father figure and to have a man in the family, and so the family interaction is real important. When the activities go well, when the happenings come off nicely it is a euphoric feeling, it is a wonderful feeling. I feel real close to [Mr. Taylor], I feel real close as a family, very hopeful about the world and life itself and all those good things."* Amy and Randy also seem to agree that the time together is good for strengthening their relationships. Amy stated *"I think it brings us closer together and we get along better because we are actually together as a family and having fun and I think like just our normal activities like homework and stuff we don't get to do that much together and so we aren't having our family time I guess, we aren't having fun together."* Randy added that they *"feel closer to each other by just having fun together, just doing things together that are fun."*

Although Amy and Randy consider their family activities to be an effective means of developing their relationships with all members of the family, they both agreed that their relationships with their mother are most impacted by the shared experiences. Amy indicated that she has *"a really good relationship with my mom cause we enjoy doing stuff together, so we get along really well."* Randy also reported that when they do things as a family, *"I feel closer to my mom."* In this case, it would seem that the more long-

term relationships benefit the most as a result of these experiences. However, Amy also believes that her relationship with Mr. Taylor benefits from their family recreation as well. She stated, "*It makes me feel like I have a dad, and I never had that before so it really helps.*" Even though the children seem to enjoy their time with their mother to a greater extent, as they learn more about Mr. Taylor and become better acquainted, these relationships seem to be strengthened as well.

Mr. and Mrs. Taylor also use family recreation as a means of educating the children. This practice demonstrates their interest in, and concern for the well being of the children. Mr. Taylor reported that "*we make an effort to come up with ideas that everyone will enjoy before we even start to implement the plan. I mean I always try to get a movie, one that has some historical significance, or a classic movie or something they haven't seen, to help them to learn, not only one that would be fun, and so far they have been pretty big hits with them and we have been able to talk about them. A few years ago we went to San Antonio, and the night before we left I rented the Alamo and that is a movie the kids wouldn't have picked themselves, but I think that they enjoyed it. We try to do things that everybody will enjoy.*" Mrs. Taylor added, "*I have wanted to show them the movies that I have thought were the best, classic movies, or we have even gone through phases of only horror movies like psycho. We will try to show them historical movies and musicals and so I see it as a way to enhance their education of history and understanding our world too.*" Mr. and Mrs. Taylor take an active interest in their family, and the planning and attention that they give to the times that they are able to share as a family indicates a genuine concern for one another.

Challenges. Although the Taylor's believe that they experience a number of benefits as a result of the activities that they share, there are a number of obstacles that they face that limit the helpfulness of those times. As was mentioned earlier in the paper, Mrs. Taylor "*grew up with a father who drank a lot*" and she believes that her childhood experiences have somewhat limited her ability to enjoy shared family experiences. She related that "*close competitive or close family times were really awful and ended up badly with someone drinking to excess and fights always broke out.*" As a result, she believes that she has developed an aversion to playing games with her family. She reported that "*we tend to get into fights, and even when we don't get into fights they ask us to play, and I find that at the idea of playing a board game I start getting anxious and I know that it is from all of my old memories of having to play scrabble or monopoly with my father and having it turn into something hideous.*" In addition to having an aversion to games, she also believed that because of her experience in her family of origin, "*it is hard to have really relaxed, fun as a family with men.*" However, her aversion to these family activities does not seem to have decreased her interest in, and desire for shared family activities. She added "*it feels real important to me to integrate Mr. Taylor and our family together so that we can have fun as a family. I would like to get beyond that anxiety because it stops me from playing. I will find excuses not to.*"

Mrs. Taylor's anxiety about playing games with the family is also related to another challenge to their enjoyment of family recreation. Randy reported that when the children play games together without Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, "*well sometimes we fight.*" Amy further mentioned that, "*sometimes like when my parents don't want to play it is usually me, Randy and Mark, and that is when we get into fights. I think when we play*

with you we behave ourselves a little better. but I think it is mostly because of competition, we all want to be the winners so it gets a little challenging when we think someone is cheating." Although the children seem to get into fights when the parents do not join them, Amy indicated that Mr. and Mrs. Taylor *"usually play every single time. But I remember a few weeks ago when Mark was here they didn't want to play and we got into a fight. Me Mark and Randy wanted to play Pictionary and my mom and Mr. Taylor didn't want to and so we decided to play monopoly. Then we got into a fight because I said that Randy cheated."* According to Mrs. Taylor these fights can be serious, but they do not occur on a frequent basis. She indicated that *"the kids including Mark, play very well together 80% of the time, and I think a lot of times they enjoy each other. But then, a lot of times they will sit down together and they will get out monopoly or play cards together and then fights erupt. And then the same things happen when we come together all of us to play. Fights will erupt too and I would really like to figure out how to work through a lot of that. Sibling arguments break out which spoils the time."* Like Mrs. Taylor, Amy believes that *"most of the time we get along pretty well, but when it becomes competitive then we get in fights."* However, she does not agree that the children fight when Mr. and Mrs. Taylor play with them. She added, *"If we play a game together with our parents we know that we can't fight and if we do we get into trouble so I think it helps us tolerate each other when they play with us."* Although these "sibling arguments" do not seem to occur too often, they do seem to present the Taylor's with an important obstacle that interrupts their enjoyment of shared family recreation.

One final challenge that was discussed in the sessions is one that is common to many adults. The responsibilities and challenges of daily life become the main focus of

our lives and we forget how to play. Mrs. Taylor reported that Mr. Taylor *“has a harder time of being child like, letting go, and being exuberant and childlike. The activities that are the most fun for me are the ones when you can really let yourself go. I think Mr. Taylor has more trouble than probably any of us, letting that go, and having that kind of fun, although he does it and when he does it he is a total joy when he can get there. Often the kids urge us to do something like playing laser tag, and then Mr. Taylor and I decided that we wanted to go in and start shooting and we loved it.”* While this challenge does represent a real obstacle to family recreation, they seem to be able to deal with, and overcome it on occasion.

Adaptability

Flexibility. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor seem to work together to meet the needs of the family. Their roles within the family seem to be somewhat flexible and capable of adapting to the situation at hand. When they are planning a family activity, all of the family members seem to be involved to some degree in the process. Mrs. Taylor identified Mr. Taylor as *“the detail man, and actually it is wonderful because I have a lot of great ideas and he has great ideas too but he figures out how and understands how to execute them and he does extreme detail planning that has worked out very well.”*

Although he seems to be the one who does the majority of the planning of the activity, Mr Taylor pointed out that *“everyone plays a part in it, and Mrs. Taylor does do most of the keeping track of everyone’s schedule and figuring out when things are going to happen, so on a weekly basis I think it holds true for our family too that the mother does most of the assembling and getting together and all that. We all have input in the*

scheduling because a lot of time it centers on an activity of either Amy being in a play or Randy playing in sports. So in that sense everyone has some input in the scheduling and planning of events, but I will readily admit that I like to be in control and I like to plan."

Mr. Taylor seems to be the one who takes care of the planning of the larger activities such as the vacations, while Mrs. Taylor is responsible for the regular smaller scale activities. They both agree, *"It works out pretty well."*

However, beyond the scheduling of the activities in which they participate outside the family, the children do not seem to have a great deal of input in the planning of family activities. According to Mrs. Taylor, *"probably 70% of the time Mr. Taylor decides that we ought to do something. He usually gets football tickets for the university and I have found for that for the most part, our activities go a lot better if he comes up with the idea and plans it and we go along with it. I help facilitate it but he is the one that comes up with the idea. There are been a few times that I have urged us to do something and everybody has gone for it which is fine, and the kids often urge us to do something like bowling and Mr. Taylor and I will reluctantly do that and then we have a gas doing it, or the silly laser quest thing, that was their activity."* Although the children do occasionally contribute ideas for family activities, their participation in the planning process seems to end at that point.

Like many families with school-aged children, coordinating the schedules of all of the family members requires a substantial amount of flexibility. Mrs. Taylor reported that for this family, *"things are so hectic during the week, other than the weekend a lot of times we can't eat together because our schedules are such that we can't meet for dinner together at the same time."* Mr. Taylor added that, *"oftentimes it is hard to have fun just*

on a Tuesday, everybody has got homework and worked all day and all those types of things and I think that you know planning family recreational activities whether it is a vacation or bowling or movie or whatever, getting out and doing things, I mean you are creating an opportunity to have fun with family and I think that is really important."

Even though their schedules make family recreation during the week very difficult, they are able to make time to do things together. Mrs. Taylor has *"taken time off from work to attend Randy's games."*

As a stepfamily, the Taylor's also have to adjust to the weekends when Mark joins the family. Randy reported that when Mark visits, *"we do more things."* They seem to make a special effort to help Mark feel like a part of the family and to enjoy the time that he spends with them. The third session provided a very salient example of how the family has adapted to Mark's visits. In this session, Mark attended for the first time and the family participated in the "Game in a Bag" activity. When they began the activity, Mark and Randy took over the planning process, and Amy was kind of left out of the process. Mrs. Taylor reported that *"we were kind of going in all different directions and we all had different ideas and I think trying to get focused. Mark had a ton of ideas and I said you know we need to keep it focused or we are going to be playing a lot of different games. The first few minutes, I wanted to smack a lot of people."* At the beginning of the activity, Mrs. Taylor was visibly frustrated when the planning process seemed to be getting out of control. At that point, she related that Mr. Taylor encouraged her to *"listen to what the kids were saying, and as I listened slowly the ideas began to make sense. I don't think Mr. Taylor and I contributed that much."* Once they were able to step back, they realized that the children had *"some pretty good ideas"* and the game

was quickly developed. In addition to the need for flexibility in dealing with the time that Mark visits the family, there is a great deal of adjustment that is required to join these two families together. Mrs. Taylor pointed out that Mr. Taylor *"is not really accustomed to living with, children are not yet a full part of his life, you know, the messiness, the loudness, and the noise, all the things that children bring to the situation. I think that he is still trying to figure things out and get to know everyone better."*

In order to deal with the variety of roles, routines, and schedules that they need to manage and combine, the members of the Taylor family have been required to adapt and compromise. Mr. Taylor stated that when differing opinions and ideas are raised *"it is a process of compromise. I think that we discuss it as a family, unless it is a situation where the other options are not doable options. But honestly, most of the time it is a matter of compromise and everybody is pretty good about it. I think it is pretty even, I know I compromise."* Similarly, Mrs. Taylor reported that *"when I take both of my children to go pick out a movie we about kill each other before getting out of there, so I usually am the one that makes the decision on the compromise and hope that it works out."* During the family Cohesion and Compromise session, the families were asked to create a game together as a family. Mrs. Taylor recalled that, *"I noticed my great resistance to it and my feeling of stress about it I think in part because I thought I was going to have to figure it all out. As I watched the children, Mark took the lead, and then the children took over and it made a very big impression on me that their ideas were quite worthwhile.. I wanted to slap them all, and I noticed that Mr. Taylor even receded into the background too on that one. I was really quite pessimistic about us being able to come up with anything, but we came up with something that was not only workable but*

fun and made sense and it was really the kids. You know Mr. Taylor and I both helped shore in the loose ends of it, but they had really good ideas.” Both Mr. and Mrs. Taylor compromised their own interests and desires to take over the process in order to allow the children the opportunity to develop the game. This compromise not only led to the development of a game that they could play together, it also enabled the parents to develop a greater understanding of the talents and abilities of the children. Mrs. Taylor indicated that this experience “seems very typical of often how our family functions. Mark or one of the kids come up with lots of ideas and then Mr. Taylor and I have to narrow it down and they have to make compromises, shift gears and come up with other ideas. The boys especially work together on coming up with something.” This process of compromise has been a crucial

part of the process of combining their two families into one cohesive unit.

As Mr. and Mrs. Taylor have begun to listen more carefully to the children, a corresponding increase in the adaptability scores were identified for some family

members (figure 10). Randy’s

perception of family adaptability shifted from ‘rigid’ to ‘structured,’ and Mrs. Taylor’s scores indicated a shift from ‘structured’ to ‘chaotic.’ Mr. Taylor also seemed to

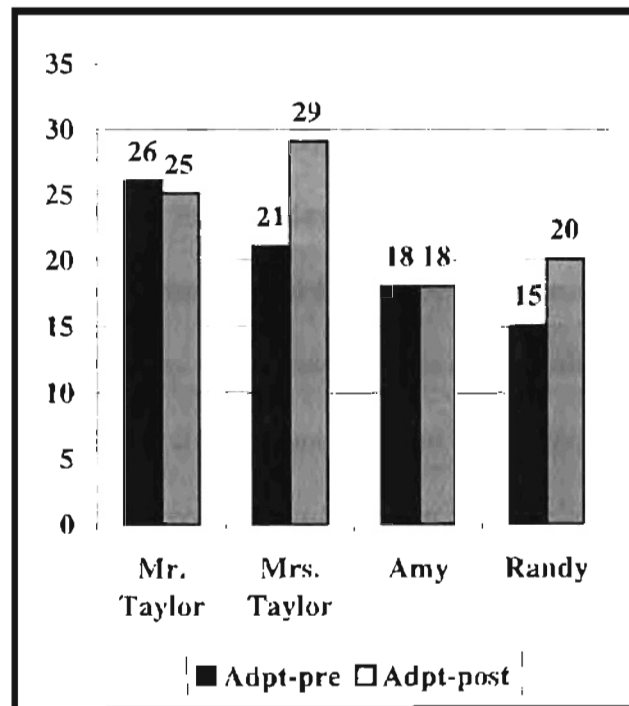


Figure 10: Taylor Family Adaptability

recognize an increase in the family's ability to deal with change. However, Amy's perception of the family did not seem to change from one administration to the next.

Stress. The members of the Taylor family seem to believe that family recreation can be a very successful means of reducing the stress in their lives. Amy believes that *"if we have had a really stressful week and then on the weekend we have a recreational day or we do stuff together it is easier for us to like forget about the week and have fun and get along with each other better, like if me and my brother fought that week or me and my mom it kind of helps us like forgive each other and put it behind us. I think that if we do stuff together then it is easier for us to get along than if we don't do stuff together, and I guess we just have fun."* Randy suggested that family recreation and leisure make it easier for them to deal with problems and stress in their lives *"because we are like having fun and we are taking our minds off of it."* For both Amy and Randy, family recreation seems to enable them to better deal with stress because family activities provide them with an escape from the stressors in their lives. Mrs. Taylor also believes that family activities can provide a means of reducing the stress in her life. *"For instance, we always like to, say on the weekend, go out to the movies. Oftentimes we will order Chinese food and rent a movie and all of us sit around in our living room and watch a movie, that is very relaxing to me, and I enjoy it, and that is great fun and that is a stress reliever."* The opportunity to relax and spend time with the family seems to provide her with a means of relaxation and stress relief.

While some activities seem to provide family members with an opportunity to deal with the stress in their lives, not all family activities are equally effective. Mrs. Taylor reported that, *"the more structured activities tend to be more stressful. In fact, a*

lot of times family situations will be a little bit more uptight and stressful because Mr. Taylor is involved, because there are more rules, more tensions, so sometimes family outings or family get-togethers are more stressful for me.” Mr. Taylor also indicated that, “sometimes family recreation creates stressful situations.” However he also believes that the stress generated by some family events can help to strengthen the family and make them more capable of dealing with stress. “I mean the more you have to deal with something hopefully the better you come at it. I think that the more recreational activities or any type of activities that you do as a family together you get to know each other better and as the kids grow older they are really changing, their personalities, so it is kind of an evolutionary process of getting reacquainted with each other. Amy is now fifteen and she is in a whole lot of different things than she was when she was twelve. I think that you get to know someone better and it is easier to deal with stress, and they get to know you, so when there are outside influences that are stressful in your lives you know enough about them and how they react and how best to help them and they can also help you.” The family activities that they share seem to provide them with an increased awareness of each other that increases enables them to help each other when things are difficult.

Frequency and Satisfaction

Frequency. All members of the Taylor family seem to enjoy the time that they are able to spend together as a family. They generally do not spend a lot of time during the week engaged in family recreation because their work and school schedules are very hectic during the week. According to Mrs. Taylor “*family recreation usually, as a whole*

group is on the weekends, and typically it is like going to the movies, doing something like movies actually, that is the most consistent family recreation that we have, when there is something special that we want to see we usually go to a matinee as a family, the kids play every weekend together, doing their basketball or whatever it is, but on a consistent basis that is probably it, we don't even really go out to dinner very much as a family. Randy's sports events give us some outings, baseball games, basketball games, flag football, we usually go to those together, and then we take a vacation at least once a year." Mr. Taylor further noted that *"the weekends are usually very hectic"* because they do a lot of things together on those days.

Their vacations have been an annual event for the last few years and have grown in scope and duration as the children have gotten older. Mr. Taylor explained, *"early on when the kids were younger we would take a long weekend trip to [an amusement park], a professional baseball game, or something that all five of us would enjoy doing. We try to go somewhere different with each vacation each summer and as the kids have gotten older then longer vacations, further away more driving."* Their most recent vacation included a trip to a northwestern National Park and lasted for a period of twelve days.

Their most consistent form of family recreation takes place every other weekend when Mark joins the family. Mrs. Taylor reported, *"I think we do something every single time Mark comes. I think we do things together probably once a week on an average as all of us together. I feel like I am with them a lot."* Although Mrs. Taylor believes that they do something together every weekend, Amy and Randy both agree that they usually only do things as a family when Mark comes to stay with them. Amy stated, *"I think we do the most things together when my stepbrother comes over. On the weekends we*

usually sit down and eat dinner together and then we will watch a movie or we will play Pictionary, or games like that. Sometimes we will go bowling, and in the summer we go swimming in our neighborhood or we go to my step grandmother's house." Similarly, Randy noted, *"we go to movies every time Mark is here, or rent a movie, and we play board games. When he is here, we do more things."*

There seems to be much less of an emphasis on family recreation on the weekends that Mark does not stay with the family. Family members seem to do more on their own or in smaller groups on those occasions. Amy will often "go to the mall with my grandma or my friends, or I will spend the night at my friend's house." Amy also added that, *"Randy likes to rent video games, my mom sometimes will go shopping or to the store. I don't know what Mr. Taylor does, he usually stays home or he goes places."* When Randy was asked about his activities on these other weekends, he replied, "I'll just go over to my friend's house." Although the members of the family all seem to use most weekends for recreation, the activities that take place on the weekends that Mark is with them are much more directed for the entire family.

On weekdays, the Taylor's have very little time for shared family activities. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor both work during the day, and Amy and Randy are in school during the day and have homework or activities on weeknights. Even though everyone agrees that their weekday schedules are *"very hectic,"* they do have some regular activities that most of the family can attend. Mrs. Taylor pointed out that she does *"a lot of stuff with them during the week, some of it built in and some of it by necessity. Several years ago we started taking Tae Kwon Do, the three of us, and Amy and I now do yoga together, so that is to me a recreational thing that I do just with her at least once a week. I also make*

all of Randy's games, and frankly during the week it is usually just me." On occasion she has left work early to attend some of Randy's games.

Randy is very involved in a variety of sports and the other family members attend games when they can. Mrs. Taylor related, *"We go to a lot of Randy's games, baseball, basketball, football."* Additionally, Mr. Taylor noted that during baseball season, *"All of us went to every one of Randy's games, and that was twice a week thing."* At the beginning of the sessions, Randy was involved in flag football games that were also attended by the rest of the family. By the end of the project, he was involved in basketball games, *"once or twice a week."* Randy noted that at that time, *"usually it is just my mom who attends the games."* When their schedules will allow, most of the family will be present at Randy's games. However, Mrs. Taylor tries to make all of the games and will even make changes in her work schedule if necessary in order to make it to the games.

Satisfaction. Mr. Taylor reported that he is very satisfied with the time that the family is able to spend together. Throughout the sessions he appeared to enjoy the activities and spending time with the family. When he was asked if he enjoyed their family activities, he replied, *"Yes, I do. I think that it is always more fun to be doing something fun with the family as opposed to the daily routine, or chores or work."* In the sessions he was always very involved and appeared to be enjoying the time that they shared as a family. Amy reported that Mr. Taylor is more involved with the family when Mark comes, because, *"he really enjoys doing stuff with Mark."* She also noted, *"I think he has fun [during most family activities] because he is nicer and not so serious I guess."* However, according to Mrs. Taylor, *"Mr. Taylor probably has the least amount of fun*

and I have yet to figure that out, if it is personality, if it is stress, or if it is a feeling of responsibility. I think that he has a harder time of being child like and I think that is a lot of what all of this is about, is letting go, of being exuberant and childlike. The activities that are the most fun for me are the ones when you can really let yourself go, . . . and I think Mr. Taylor has more trouble than probably any of us, letting that go, and having that kind of fun, although he does it and when he does it he is a total joy when he can get there." In addition, as has been mentioned many times in this paper, Mr. Taylor is still attempting to learn about the family and to blend in and become a part of it.

Over the course of the sessions, Mrs. Taylor was the most active member of her family. When asked about her level of satisfaction with the family activities, she stated that, "*I look forward to the activities and I enjoy doing things with the family. I look forward to that, being with them and doing that kind of thing.*" Additionally, the time that she spends at Randy's games are, "*kind of a social time for me, there are other parents there, and I enjoy it.*" Although she indicated that she really does enjoy the activities that they share together, much of her enjoyment seems to come vicariously through the children. She seems to gain a great deal of personal satisfaction from the development of her children. She reported that "*the activities that I think about the most are like the vacations, that I look forward to the most, I love to travel, and I have so many things that I want to show my children, so many things that I want them to experience, so many sites that I want them to see, so many places that I want them to go.*" Although she does not enjoy riding on roller coasters, she does enjoy going to amusement parks with the family because, "*they really enjoy that and it is pleasurable for me to go and get*

scared for them. I mean it is always more fun to be doing something fun with the family as opposed to the daily routine, or chores or work, and the kids like that better too."

While Mrs. Taylor seems to enjoy the time together with the family, Amy has noticed that, *"sometimes she is kind of quiet, but I think she has fun."* When Randy was asked if he thought that his mother enjoyed their family recreation, her replied. *"No, because I think she is stressed sometimes. I think that she enjoys watching movies, but like if we did something big like going on a vacation or something she doesn't seem like she has as good of a time."* Much of Mrs. Taylor's stress seems to be related to the fact that they are a stepfamily and are working very hard to develop lasting relationships. Mrs. Taylor stated, *"there are always fights that break out between the kids which is stressful and which I think are more stressful in a blended family, because I really don't want my child hurting my new husband's child. It is almost like having a guest along, the feeling that this is our guest and we want them to like us and we want to treat them nicely we don't want them to go away."* She is the "peacemaker" in the family and *"tries to smooth things over so that everyone can have a good time."*

The children all seem to be very involved in family activities and enjoy the time that they spend together. Amy reported that she looks forward to doing things with her family because, *"it is fun to be with my family, I have fun with them. I enjoy getting along with them and having fun. I guess just going out and doing something together, and having fun is what I like about it."* Randy indicated that recreation *"helps us get along, and I have fun unless I am in a bad mood."* Although Mark only attended two of the sessions, he seemed to be very involved and interested in spending time with the family. Mrs. Taylor believes that Mark *"has a blast, he is a very joyous, gregarious kid*

and for the most part, yeah I think he has a blast.” Amy also agrees that Mark enjoys the family activities that they share when he visits. “I think he has fun a lot.”

Experience of Leisure Education Sessions

In the initial interview with the family, Mrs. Taylor mentioned that *“one of things that I am hoping for as a result of this is that when we do play we won’t get into conflicts. If somebody is not getting it right and they pout or they get mad or if we pair up and the other person doesn’t do well we get mad at the other person messing us up. I think that we ought to be able to play better, but I have no skills for it. I haven’t been in a family that has worked those things out.”* Mr. and Mrs. Taylor both seemed to be very motivated to strengthen their family, and had been working on a number of the skills that we discussed and practiced prior to their participation in the sessions. Their greatest challenge seemed to be learning to successfully navigate the process of blending their families together.

Even though the Taylor’s were already practicing several of the skills that were being practiced in the sessions, they seemed to obtain some very important skills and information from the experience. Mr. Taylor stated that, *“ I have decided or determined through the sessions that we do a lot of things right and it has kind of reinforced, that we kind of do that. And now I kind of know more about why it is a good idea, and why it is that you shouldn’t jump right in on the evaluating. We should hit the ideas first and let everybody have their say, and then evaluate the ideas after. I think the value of the sessions probably has been more of a reinforcement of the way that we have gone about doing things.”*

Mrs. Taylor specifically mentioned the problem solving skills as having been particularly helpful to their family. She stated, *"I really loved the brainstorming idea, and we are going to use that for sure. So the brainstorming thing [before you decide what to do] is a great idea, and really one of the best most helpful things is the day that we made that game as a family. I noticed my great resistance to it and my feeling of stress about it, and then the children took over and it made a very big impression on me that their ideas were quite worthwhile. You know Mr. Taylor and I both helped put the ideas together, but they had really good ideas."* In relation to the problem solving skills, Mr. Taylor noted that, *"it has made me aware and I will be aware when we have these idea and compromise sessions to let everyone you know try to get everybody to participate because ultimately you will end up with a better end result. I think I probably knew that, and again I think I will be more aware of those types of things."*

While Mr. and Mrs. Taylor mentioned that the brainstorming activity had been very helpful to them, the children indicated that they have noticed the difference in the way that they relate to one another as a family. Amy stated that the sessions have *"helped Mr. Taylor consider [the children's] ideas a little better, because usually I think he would just come up with ideas and then he would do what he wanted to do and what he thought was more convenient for him. I think that the [sessions] have helped him to have a better understanding of everybody's ideas. I think I have seen the biggest change in Mr. Taylor."* Randy also stated that after having participated in the sessions, *"we listen to each others ideas more. I think we are getting along more now because it has made us think about what we usually do together, and how we come up with ideas."* The fact that the children have noticed differences in the family functioning would seem to

indicate that they are practicing the skills, and that the skills have been very useful to them.

Following the second administration of the FACES III questionnaire, the cohesion scores of all family members fell within the higher end of the balanced or midrange portions of the Circumplex model (Figure 11). The greatest differences between the

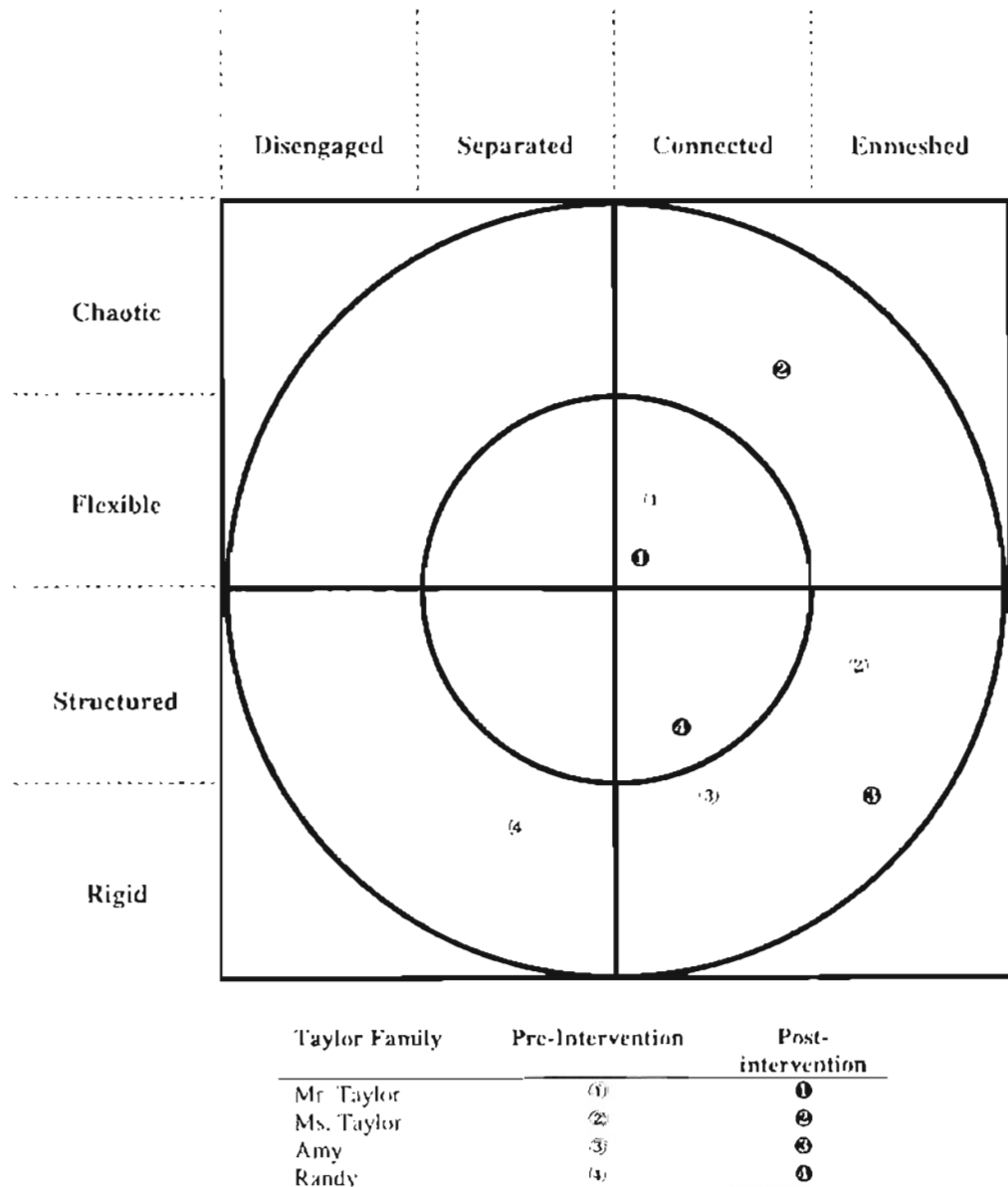


Figure 11: Taylor Family Circumplex Model

perceptions of family members occurred on the adaptability dimension of family functioning. Both Mr. and Mrs. Taylor believe that family to be much more adaptable than the children seem to. While Mr. and Mrs. Taylor's scores fell within the 'flexible' and 'chaotic' ranges respectively, the children's scores fell within the 'structured' (Randy) and 'rigid' ranges. Mrs. Taylor and Randy experienced the most notable changes. Mrs. Taylor's perception of family functioning moved from 'structurally enmeshed' to chaotically connected,' and Randy's perception changed from 'rigidly separated' to 'structurally connected.'

Mrs. Taylor believes that their joint participation in the sessions has helped them to gain more common experience as a family. She reported that *"it has given us a dialogue which I think is real helpful and will be helpful to us, it has given us a frame of reference, ideas to talk about, some skills for sure, but I think mostly it has given us a dialogue so that we all know that OK we want to do this as a family and here are the different things that we can do and these are some of the things that we learned, I think it will benefit us a lot in the future."* The sessions seem to have allowed them to learn more about each other in a variety of situations and an opportunity to enjoy doing things together during a variety of new activities.

Frequency. When they was asked whether or not they were doing more together now than before the sessions, they all agreed that the number or scheduling of family activities that they participate in has not changed following the sessions. Mrs. Taylor stated that, *"I think it is the same because our time has been so limited this fall really, I don't think that we have had enough experience in living our life out in the short six weeks we learned a few things and had some ideas and all that but we haven't had time*

to practice it yet.” Amy replied that nothing has changed and that “we still pretty much do the same things every other weekend whenever Mark is here.”

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Although each participant family represented a different form of family composition, members of each family indicated that participation in the leisure education program was beneficial for their family. The Smith family members agreed that the communication skills they developed have helped them to listen to each other more. Ms. Young and Emily reported that the coping skills have helped them to better manage the stress in their lives. Furthermore, the members of the Taylor family identified the problem solving skills as having had the greatest impact on their family functioning. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor now report a greater willingness to listen to the ideas of their children, and the children believe that they have more input into family decisions. Even though each of the families had many differences in composition and organization, all seem to have benefited from their participation in the sessions.

Despite their differences, each family also had some important similarities. Each of the families entered the program with the common belief that shared family recreation can play an important role in strengthening their families. All of the individual family members also reported that they generally enjoy the time that their families spend together. Additionally, at the conclusion of the study, each of the three families reported that their participation in the sessions allowed them to focus on their families and to develop a better understanding of one another.

Over the course of the study, as family members began to implement the skills that they had learned, with few exceptions, the FACES III cohesion and adaptability scores of family members tended to move toward the more central ranges of the Circumplex model. However, the adaptability scores of mothers tended to increase dramatically especially in the families that had reported the greatest changes in family functioning. Finally, despite the fact that each family was able to identify benefits that they had obtained from the sessions, there was little reported change in the frequency of, or satisfaction with, family activities.

Discussion of Findings

In this section each of the research questions are addressed in relation to the experiences of the participants. First, the relationship between the leisure education sessions and family cohesion is examined. This discussion will be followed by a discussion of the relationship between the leisure education program and family adaptability. Finally, the relationship between the leisure education program and the frequency of, and satisfaction with family recreation was discussed.

One basic similarity between these three families was a belief that shared family activity has a positive impact on the family. This belief in the importance of family recreation and leisure formed the basis for their participation in the study as well as the impetus for their efforts to improve their relationships through shared activity. Family systems theory suggests that family members share a common view of the world that is used to interpret the information that is introduced into the system. This shared view of the world, referred to as a map, contains information about the rules, values, and beliefs

of the system and serves to govern the behavior of family members (Sluzki, 1983). As new information was obtained throughout the sessions, each family processed the information differently based on their view of the world. However, this shared belief in the value of family recreation may have prepared the families to respond favorably to the leisure education intervention.

Cohesion. The relationship between the leisure education sessions and family cohesion generally appeared to be positive in nature. Over the course of the study, each of the families indicated that their participation in the sessions had required them to focus more on their families and had enhanced their awareness of family functioning. Family members also indicated that they had begun to focus more upon strengthening their families, and that as a result have been able to learn more about one another. In turn, a greater understanding of other family members has facilitated the development of more cohesive relationships.

According to the members of the Smith family, learning about one another has allowed them to strengthen their relationships with one another, and to help each other deal with the challenges that they face. Similarly, the members of the Taylor family have indicated that as a stepfamily, the activities that they share with one another also provide them with an opportunity to learn about each other and to combine their two families into one cohesive unit. For the Smith's and the Taylor's, this increased focus on the family has allowed family members to learn about each other and to strengthen their family relationships.

While each of the families believed that joint participation in recreation positively impacts their family relationships, each individual family seemed to develop different

skills. Clearly each of the families entered the program with a variety of different needs and at different levels of overall family functioning. The needs of the family and the level of family functioning of the families seemed to be related to the skills developed by each family over the course of the project.

The members of the Smith family indicated that the communication skills developed over the course of the sessions had been very helpful to them. Mrs. Smith reported having made a concerted attempt to take the time to listen to her children in order to better understand their reasoning and motivation. She also indicated that she and her husband listen to each other more. At the beginning of the sessions, communication in the Smith family was marked by a great deal of speaking and low degree of listening. Dattilo (1999) refers to communication as "a key element in social interactions," (p. 85) and Olson et al. (1983) have identified communication as a facilitating dimension of relationships, which is considered to be critical in the facilitation of improved family cohesion and adaptability. Based on the level of functioning at the beginning of the sessions, developing this fundamental skill was crucial to enhancing their family relationships through recreation. Additionally, the cohesion scores for each of the members of the Smith family had changed at the post session administration of the FACES III instrument. While the direction of the individual changes differed, the observed differences in pre and post session scores would seem to indicate that participation in the leisure education program had some impact on family cohesion.

At the beginning of the program, the members of the Taylor family seemed to be very efficient at communicating with one another. Their interactions were marked by a much greater amount of listening and expression. The members of the Taylor family all

referred to the problem solving skills as the greatest benefit to their family. Their greatest area of concern included the development of an enhanced understanding of one another and the combination of their family systems into one cohesive unit. They were at a point in their development where higher-level skills such as problem solving, were more beneficial to their level of family functioning. At the post session administration of the FACES III instrument, the cohesion scores of all family members had changed. The scores for both of the children indicated an increase in family cohesion.

However, the experience of the Young family was somewhat different. Ms. Young reported that the information about coping skills was the most beneficial to her and her family. While an increased capacity to cope with stress may have an impact on their family relationships, the effects were not evident during the course of the project. The fact that Ms. Young is the single parent of a child with learning disabilities may provide a partial explanation for this apparent absence of benefits similar to those experienced by the Taylor and Smith families. A study conducted by Mactavish, Schleien, and Tabourne (1997) found that the families of children with disabilities appear to experience an extra degree of difficulty when preparing them to participate in activities away from home, and that their family leisure was reportedly less spontaneous and required extensive planning (Mactavish et al.). Ms. Young's health problems may serve to accentuate the difficulty associated with planning family recreation.

At the onset of the leisure education program, Emily and Ms. Young's communication seemed to be limited and occurred only when necessary. They seemed to be more concerned with meeting the more basic needs of the family. The large majority of Ms. Young's time as a single parent is given to providing for the basic physiological

needs of her family. The work of Abraham Maslow indicated that the needs of individuals are arranged hierarchically and that the more basic needs must be met before people can concern themselves with the higher level needs (Santrock & Yussen, 1992). On a number of occasions, Ms. Young expressed trepidation about the world around her, and participation in social situations. She seems to be so involved with meeting the physiological and safety needs that she is unable to concern herself with any of the higher-level needs. Family systems theory also provides another possible explanation for the perceived lack of change in the Young family. The principle of morphostasis indicates that when one part of the family system attempts to change in response to new inputs, one of the reactions that commonly occurs is that some of the other parts of the family system try to preserve the status quo (Burr, Day, & Bahr, 1993). Therefore, the Young family may have other things happening in their lives, such as health problems, that prevented the system from changing.

For the families in this study, the leisure education sessions provided the opportunity for family members to spend more time together in recreation. The findings of this study seem to provide additional support for previous research examining family recreation. Such research has indicated that improved communication among family members, higher quality of family relationships and enhanced cohesiveness are related to participation in family recreation (Holman & Epperson, 1984; Orthner & Mancini, 1991).

Adaptability. Adaptability is the concept that represents the family's ability to adjust their roles and rules and allow change to occur as new information is introduced into the system. The information gathered from the FACES III questionnaire also indicates that changes in family functioning may have a more pronounced impact upon

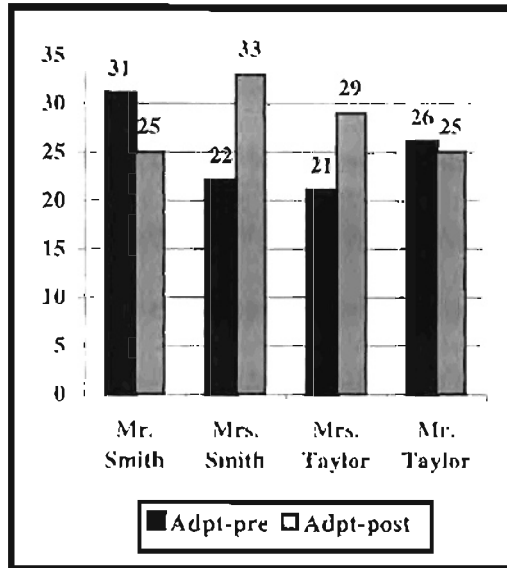


Figure 12: Adaptability for Mothers and Fathers

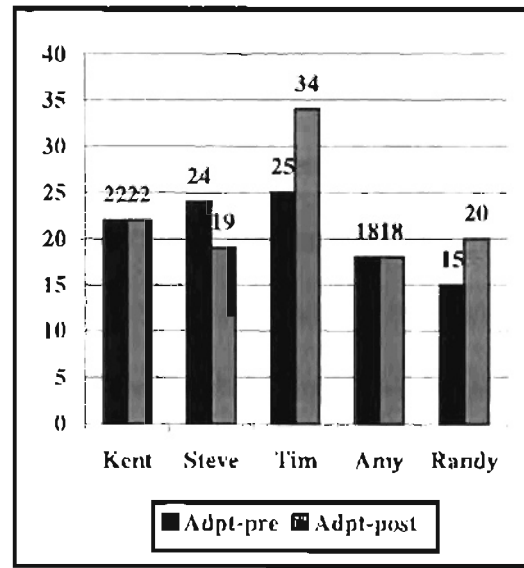


Figure 13: Adaptability Scores for Children

mothers. Prior to the sessions, both Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Taylor perceived their families to be 'structured' in their approach to dealing with change. However, following the sessions, their adaptability scores increased dramatically and were located within the 'chaotic' range of the Circumplex model. In contrast, the FACES III scores for adaptability for both Mr. Smith and Mr. Taylor declined during the same period of time (figure 12). Comparatively, the adaptability scores of the children also changed very little with the exception of Tim (figure 13). All of the other children scored within the more balanced ranges of flexible and structured on the Circumplex model. These differences seem to indicate that mothers are more negatively influenced by changes in family functioning. This apparent relationship may also be linked to the idea that mothers tend to be the person who takes the responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the family. While the change in the adaptability scores seemed to move to a less functional level, it is possible that these changes may ultimately be more functional and satisfying for each family member.

Systems theory may also provide some additional explanation for this change in the perceptions of mothers. The concept of wholeness indicates that a change in one member of the system will have an impact upon all of the other members of the system. Therefore, changes that occur within each individual will effect changes that will spread throughout the entire system, producing a rearrangement of the rules and roles of family members (Combrinck & Graham, 1985). As other family members began to take on more of the responsibility for the management of family recreation, the mothers may have experienced a corresponding reduction in their role as manager within the family. The chaotic adaptability scores reported by the mothers may have been a reflection of these changes in their position within their families.

This relationship seemed to hold true for the mothers in families that reported changes in their family functioning. However, Ms. Young's family reported few if any changes in their approach to family recreation. Ms. Young's adaptability scores had actually decreased by the second administration of the FACES III questionnaire. For her, meeting the physiological and safety needs of her family may have prevented her family from making any far-reaching change. However, a more complete explanation can possibly be offered by an examination of the research on the subject of change.

In 1998, Christensen, Russell, Miller, and Peterson completed a study examining the process of change in a number of married couples in a family therapy setting. Based on their research, they identified five contextual factors that were important to the process of change for their clients. These preconditions included a feeling of safety in their relationships, a sense of fairness, normalization of their problems, hope for the future, and pacing of conversations to ensure understanding. In addition, they identified three

variables that co-occurred with increased relationships satisfaction during the process of therapy. The participants in their study consistently linked at least two of these variables in any single description of change. These three variables included increases in positive affect, open and clear communication, and new skills and information. Ms. Young's apprehension about the world and her constant concern about providing for the needs of her family may have prevented the occurrence of the preconditions for change. Ms. Young may not have felt safe, or hopeful, or some of these other conditions. For example, on several occasions, she expressed trepidation about the world around her and in a variety of social relationships. In addition, the limited amount of communication within her family and the persistent stress and depression may have limited the impact of new skills and information.

Additionally, in their study of addictive behaviors, Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (1992) presented a model representing the process of change. They proposed that the process of change is a spiral process ranging from precontemplation of change to termination of the change. They proposed that individuals move from the first phase to the phases of contemplation, preparation, and action. As individuals begin to make changes they enter a stage of maintenance of the behavior. They point out that lasting change involves a number of repeated attempts before lasting change is achieved. Therefore, as the changes fail to take root at one stage, people reenter the precontemplation phase and begin again at that point. According to this model, individuals are not able to make changes in their lives until they have prepared themselves for the change. Perhaps the members of the Young family did not experience

a great deal of change because they were not prepared or capable of change at the present time.

Frequency and Satisfaction. The third research question examined the relationship between a leisure education program and the frequency of, and satisfaction with family recreation. In each of the three families, the frequency of participation in family activities changed very little over the course of the study. However, Mrs. Smith indicated that she had started turning down some outside activities in order to allow her to have more time with the family. Kent, Steve, and Tim all reported that they are doing more things as a family following the sessions. However, the other two families reported that their participation in family recreation had not changed. The schedules of the members of the participant families seem to play an important role in limiting the time available for family activities. Additionally, the relatively short-term duration of the leisure education program may not have been sufficient to observe any real change in the frequency of family recreation.

Similarly, the degree of satisfaction with family recreation seems to have changed very little for the families in this study. At the beginning of the study each of the participants indicated that they already enjoyed family activities and spending time together as a family. Their degree of satisfaction with the activities themselves did not seem to change. However, their satisfaction with their relationships with other families, or family members did seem to increase for many of the participants.

Interestingly, mothers appeared to experience the greatest change in satisfaction of family recreation. Some of the research on family recreation has noted that mothers tend to find it more difficult to enjoy family recreation than other members of the family.

Larson, Gillman and Richards (1997) found that mothers do not appear to experience an increase in role satisfaction from the participation in family recreation. Additionally, women also had more consistently positive experiences during their non-family discretionary activities. They attempted to explain this difference by indicating that for mothers; family leisure is often inter-mixed with the role of caring for children and managing the home. The mothers in this study also seemed to experience the same difficulty enjoying family activities.

In her family, Mrs. Smith fills the role of the family manager. Her satisfaction with family recreation and leisure activities seems to be strongly related to the experience of the other family members. She is able to enjoy the time together when the children are happy, but when there are disagreements and arguments, she finds it much more difficult to enjoy the experience. Similarly, Mrs. Taylor is also the manager of her family. She stated on a number of occasions that she is often the one person in her family that attempts to ensure that everyone else enjoys their shared family activities. The experiences of the mothers in this study provide support for previous findings indicating that mothers have a more difficult time enjoying family recreation than other members of the family.

Limitations of the Present Study

The greatest limitations of the present study involve the duration of the project, and the number of families included in the study. The original design of the study called for the completion of the study in a period of eight weeks. However, in practice, the study lasted for period of three months. Dropouts and scheduling concerns severely

disrupted the continuity of the sessions (Appendix F). The three families were rarely able to meet together in one group, and a number of make-up sessions were required. While the content of these make-up sessions was the same, the presentation of the material may have been noticeably different.

In addition, the small number of families included in the study, and the great deal of variety in family composition and level of functioning may have limited the depth and breadth of the findings of the present study. The results of this study seem to indicate that participation in a leisure education program has the potential to strengthen families. However, additional information about each of the family types might have been obtained had more families been included in the study.

Conclusions

Leisure Education and Families

The results of the present study seem to indicate that leisure education programs can play an important role in strengthening families. The families that participated in the leisure education sessions obtained some useful skills that have the potential to strengthen their families. The program also presented each of the families with an opportunity to participate in activities as a family.

There are a variety of challenges associated with designing and implementing leisure education for families in crisis. Researchers should expect to experience scheduling difficulties related to the busy schedules and stress that often accompanies crisis situations. For example, in the present study, one of the families needed to reschedule two consecutive sessions because they had forgotten about previously

scheduled events that they were required to attend. Researchers need to plan for this eventuality and remain flexible enough to adapt effectively.

Additionally, families in crisis may also consist of individuals with a variety of behavioral problems. Families are made up of a variety of individuals with differing skills, interests and abilities. Developing effective programs to meet the variety of needs of all of the participants is very challenging. In the present study one participant had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder, and another had an unspecified learning disorder. These participants exhibited difficulty following directions, and an unwillingness or inability to concentrate on the topic for extended periods of time. Researchers need to design the sessions to accommodate these difficulties by including a number of interactive activities that will maintain attention and limit the duration of activities. Additionally, the processing phase of each activity should be prepared to highlight important information succinctly and avoid less relevant topics. Participants in this study also experienced difficulty following through with the completion of homework assignments. Homework assignments need to be clearly explained and additional measures should be taken to remind participants about the homework in between sessions.

FACES III

The present study indicated that the FACES III instrument can be a very useful tool for the providers of leisure education programs. FACES III is very simple to administer and score, and can be used to track changes in family cohesion and

adaptability. The FACES III instrument also was very helpful as a triangulation tool, and allowed the researcher to identify areas that needed additional attention.

Field Research

Benefits. Many of the benefits associated with field research can be attributed to the fact that such studies tend to focus on a smaller number of subjects and require a more in-depth association with participants. This close relationship with the participants allows the researcher to develop a more complete understanding of the perspectives of the participants. In this study, the variety of methods of data collection allowed the researcher to observe the participants in a variety of situations and contexts. Combining the FACES III questionnaire with individual and family interviews, observations, and the impressions of the researcher provided for a broad understanding of each of the participants.

Over the course of the study, scheduling conflicts required the sessions to be held in three different locations. Sessions were held in the local community center, churches, and in the homes of participants. The variety of settings allowed the researcher to more effectively evaluate the impact of the particular context within which the participants acted, and the influence that this context had on their actions. For example, scheduling conflicts required the Smith family to participate in the Cohesion and Compromise session without the other families. On this occasion, Steve's behavior became much more unruly than in previous sessions. The opportunity to observe the change in his behavior provided additional insight into the functioning of the Smith family. In addition, the in-depth nature of field research allows the researcher to more completely observe the process from beginning to end. In the present study, the researcher was able

to observe the actions of the participants during the sessions and discuss their experiences with the homework assignments completed during the week.

The relationships developed with the participants in a field research study also facilitate the development of a more accurate and complete understanding of participant intents and behavior. Member checks provide the researcher with the opportunity to discuss his or her perceptions of family functioning with participants in order to assess the accuracy of the conclusions. Furthermore, the nature of field research also allows for a great deal of flexibility in scheduling and programming the individual sessions. In this study, the researcher was able to tailor the activities for each session to more effectively meet the specific needs of the participants. Such flexibility proved to be invaluable to the completion of this study.

Challenges. Over the course of this project a number of problems have arisen that have complicated and delayed its implementation. The majority of these issues are common to field research and careful planning can minimize their impact. Due to the nature of a case study design and the small sample size utilized in such studies, dropouts present a major area of concern. In the present study, one family dropped out following the initial interviews and the evening prior to the scheduled first session. In this case, the sessions commenced on schedule with only two participant families. Although the search for alternate participants was initiated immediately following this incident, the delay disrupted the continuity of the sessions for the remaining families, and necessitated a hurried effort to complete the initial interview and present the first session to the new participants. When possible, alternate participants should be identified prior to the initiation of the project.

The second, and most significant difficulty associated with the present study centered on the coordination of the schedules of the participants, the facility, and the researcher. Following the initial session, each of the three families experienced a great deal of difficulty scheduling and keeping appointments. This difficulty was exacerbated by the time constraints placed upon the completion of this study and the holidays that conflicted with the planned sessions. Due to the initial delays, the project began later than the originally scheduled start date and conflicted with Halloween, and Thanksgiving. Although the families were available around the holidays, the facility in which the sessions were held was unavailable during those times and an alternate facility had to be located. The large number of scheduling conflicts encountered during the sessions disrupted the continuity of the sessions and increased the duration of the project considerably (Appendix F). Future attempts at similar research should identify an alternate location prior to the initiation of the project, avoid scheduling sessions around major holidays, and leave room in the schedule for flexibility.

In addition to scheduling difficulties, the presence of the video cameras and tape recorders may have impacted the experience for several of the participants. Emily seemed to be constantly aware of the presence of the recording equipment and remained quiet for the majority of the sessions. After the sessions, when the equipment was turned off, she often became somewhat more vocal and expressive. Mrs. Smith also made a number of remarks about the presence of cameras in the room. However, her participation did not seem to be drastically impacted by their presence. The design of the facility made the use of a tripod necessary, and as a result, hiding or disguising the

equipment would have been extremely difficult. Future research should plan in advance to provide a means of making the cameras less obvious.

Future Application and Research

Future attempts at implementing similar programs and studies should anticipate scheduling difficulties and plan for additional make-up sessions and an increased duration of the entire program. The facilitators of such programs should familiarize themselves with common disabilities and disorders common to the population served by the program. Such awareness would maximize the effectiveness of the program for the participant families and provide them with an effective means of strengthening their familial relationships.

Furthermore, homework assignments given to participants represent the most effective means of skill development and should be emphasized. Researchers should be prepared to contact participants between sessions to check up on progress and to provide family members with a reminder prior to the next session. Combining this kind of project with a mentoring program and the efforts of their regular therapist would enable the participant families to more consistently complete their homework and practice their skills at home.

In the present study, activities that were shorter in duration and those requiring some physical activity tended to encourage greater participation. Several of the activities included in this program required as much as one hour to complete. In such activities, the children seemed to have a tendency to become much less involved over time. Including a greater number of activities that require less time to implement would seem to be a much

more effective approach. In addition, activities that required a greater degree of personal contemplation were less effective. Activities with a straightforward application and limited personal interpretation were more effective, especially for the children.

Future implementation of similar programs should also consider increasing the duration of the program. Although restricting the program to six sessions enhances the ease of implementation, doing so also limits the time that participants are able to learn and practice these important skills. The communication and self-awareness sessions present the basic skills that are necessary to effectively develop the skills introduced in later sessions. Therefore, these two important sessions could be repeated and practiced before moving on to the following sessions. Additionally, the overall length of the program should be increased. The compromise and cohesion session could easily be separated into two sessions, and sessions including social skills training could also be added to the program.

Finally, participant families could also be asked to take part in a weekend family outing organized by the facilitators. This addition would be highly recommended and could provide important insight into family patterns of interaction and highlight the importance of family activities for the participants. Weekend activities could include challenge course attendance, hiking, camping, cycling, rafting, or a number of other family oriented activities. If such activities were included both prior to, and following the sessions, the activities could serve as a means of comparison and as a measure of progress.

Mental Health Agencies

The results of this study also provided some important implications for mental health providers. Leisure education programs have the potential to provide mental health professionals with an alternative means of helping families. Leisure education programs could be used to augment the process of family therapy and would allow the participants to learn and develop important skills in a more enjoyable environment. Additionally, therapists would be able to observe the families in an alternate setting which could present the therapist with a wealth of information concerning family functioning. The formulation of partnerships between leisure service providers and mental health professionals is recommended. In such a partnership, mental health providers could screen participant families and group participant families with similar problems together and programs specific to the needs of the participants could be developed. Community based family leisure education programs can provide a bridge between the family therapy agency and the community.

Finally, combining the leisure education program with a mentoring program could greatly increase the effectiveness of the program. Mentors could provide the families with encouragement in times of difficulty, and could assist them in the completion of their homework assignments. A program combining family therapy, leisure education, and a mentoring program could greatly enhance the effectiveness of the program and provide additional benefits to participants.

Community Recreation

Community recreation providers could also play an important role in the provision of similar leisure education programs. There are a number of families in the communities serviced by community recreation organizations that could benefit from programs such as the one implemented in this study. Furthermore, leisure education programs can provide the providers of community recreation with greater opportunities to assist the families in their areas. Recreation providers possess the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and implement effective leisure education programs. Additionally, community recreation agencies also have the facilities in which these programs could be conducted.

Based on the findings of previous research and the present study, family recreation holds the potential for strengthening family relationships and thereby improving the overall quality of life. Additional research and implementation of this and similar programs designed to help families learn to play together more effectively, can play an important role in combating the concerns and problems of society by addressing the problems at the most basic level of human social organization: the family.

The present study indicated that leisure education programs designed for families in crisis can have the potential to serve as a powerful means of strengthening families. In order for the programs to be effective, strong facilitation skills are necessary to present the material and activities in a way that is meaningful to the participants.

The value of the present study is its potential to strengthen families in crisis by giving them the skills and opportunity to experience the benefits of family recreation.

Additionally, it provides support for the assertion that leisure education can help families strengthen their levels of cohesion and adaptability in their family relationships.

However, for leisure education programs to be effective the programmer must be aware that some families may not be prepared to change or they are in a situation that may require the knowledge of a more experienced family therapist. For the programs to promote enduring change the participants families must be motivated to change.

From the results of the present study the families involved appeared to have developed increased communication skills and problem solving skills, and the ability to more effectively deal with stressful situations. Additionally, they all seemed to focus more, and place more emphasis, on the family.

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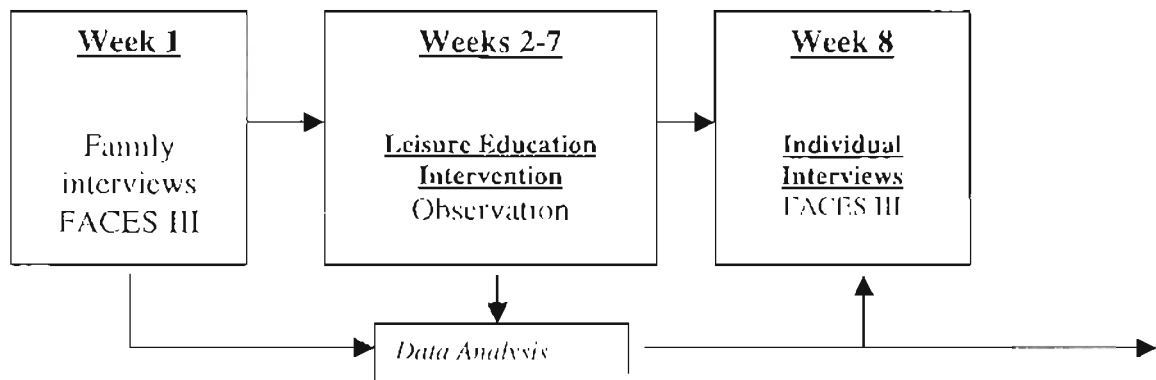
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Timetable of Research



Appendix B

FAMILY CONSENT/ASSENT FORM

A. Authorization

I, _____, hereby authorize or direct Eric D. Howes or associates/assistants of his choosing, to perform the following treatment or procedure.

B. Description

Title of Study: Families and Leisure Education: A Qualitative Study is designed to examine the relationship between leisure education and family interaction. This study involves research and is being conducted through Oklahoma State University. The project has received full support from the Director of Chisolm Trail Counseling Services Inc.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between a series of six leisure education sessions, and the closeness of family relationships and the family's ability to deal with change. In addition, this study will investigate the feasibility of leisure education as a means of working with families to enhance the quality of the relationships within the family.

The study will be conducted over a period of eight weeks and each participant family will meet once each week for approximately 1-1 ½ hours. During the first week of the study, participant family will meet with the researcher for a family interview. These interviews will focus on the recreation patterns of the family, and each of the interviews will be audiotaped. In addition, each family member will complete a 20 item questionnaire (FACES III).

The second through the seventh week will consist of a series of leisure education sessions covering the following topics: 1) communication skills, 2) self awareness and respect for others, 3) family cohesion and compromise, 4) problem solving skills, 5) coping skills and strategies, and 6) leisure planning skills. Each session will include homework that the participant families will be asked to complete that week following the leisure education session. All participant families will meet together as a group for these sessions, and all sessions will be videotaped.

During the eighth week of the study, the participant families will meet again with the researcher for individual interviews and to complete the questionnaire a second time. These interviews will also be audiotaped.

Leisure education and family recreation have the potential to play an important role in strengthening family relationships. Leisure education sessions can help families to

develop more effective communication skills as well as help them to work together to plan shared activities that are designed to meet the needs of all family members.

In order to protect participant confidentiality, the names of families and individual family members will not be connected to the data in any way. The written manuscript of the study will include imaginary names will be used to facilitate the readability of the study. In addition, information obtained during the study will be reviewed only by those individuals directly involved in conducting the study. Furthermore, information gathered from individual family members will not be shared with other family members, or with employees of the Family Therapy agency. All of the information collected on videotapes and audiotapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and will be reviewed only by the researchers, and at the conclusion of the study all information on the videotapes and audiotapes will be erased.

If you have any questions about the research, your rights as participant in the study or any research-related injury please contact: Eric D. Howes, Researcher, OSU, 115A Colvin Center, Stillwater, OK 74078, Phone: 405-744-5507, Colleen D. Hood, Research Advisor, OSU, 108 Colvin Center, Stillwater, OK 74078, Phone: 405-744-5302, Helen Chamberlain, Counseling Services Director, 1501 W. Commerce, Yukon Oklahoma 73085-1290, Phone: (405) 354-3927, or Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, OSU, 203 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078, Phone: 405-744-5700

C. Voluntary Participation

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I will not be penalized if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my participation in this project at any time without penalty after I notify the project director.

D. Consent

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I agree to the participation of my children. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____
Time: _____ (a.m./p.m.)

Signature of Mother: _____

Signature of Father: _____

Signature of person authorized to sign for subject, if required

E. Assent

I have listened to the description of the study and I fully understand it. I agree to participate fully and voluntarily.

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Witness(es) if required _____

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Signed: _____

Project director or authorized representative

Appendix C

Questionnaires, instruments

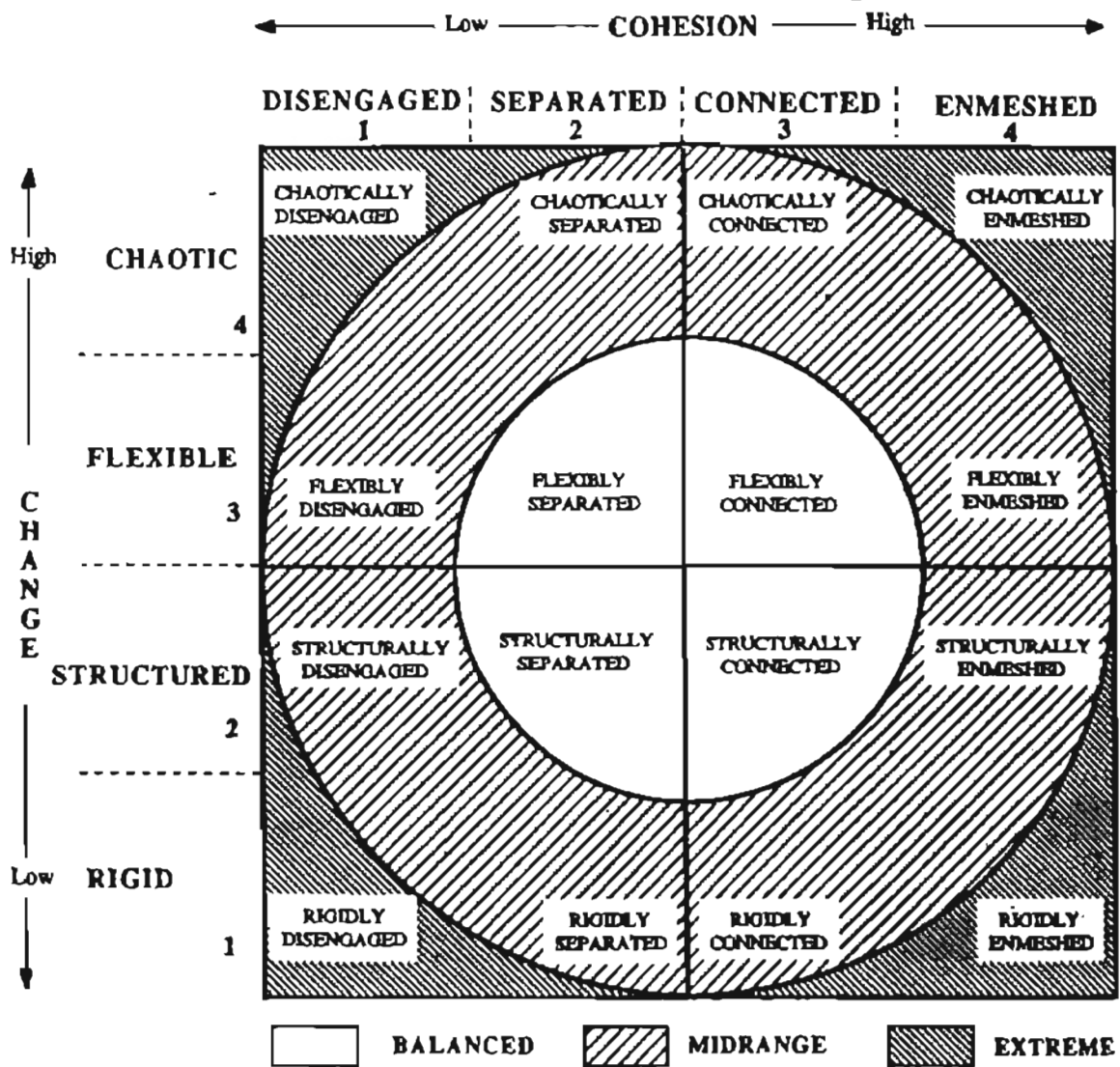
This section of the survey is about your family. Read the following statements and decide for each one how frequent, on a scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always), the described behavior occurs in your family.

1=Almost never; 2=Once in a while; 3=Sometimes; 4=Frequently; 5=Almost always

DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY NOW:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Family members ask each other for help. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. In solving problems, the children's suggestions are followed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. We approve of each other's friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Children have a say in their discipline. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. We like to do things with just our immediate family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Different persons act as leaders in our family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Family members feel closer to other family members than to people outside the family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Our family changes its way of handling tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Family members like to spend free time with each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Parent(s) and children discuss punishment together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Family members feel very close to each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. The children make the decisions in our family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. When our family gets together for activities, everybody is present. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Rules change in our family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. We can easily think of things to do together as a family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. We shift household responsibilities from person to person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Family members consult other family members on their decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. It is hard to identify the leader(s) in our family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Family togetherness is very important. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. It is hard to tell who does which household chores. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Circumplex Model: Sixteen Types of Marital and Family Systems



RATER: _____

FAMILY: _____
(Name or Number)

DATE: _____

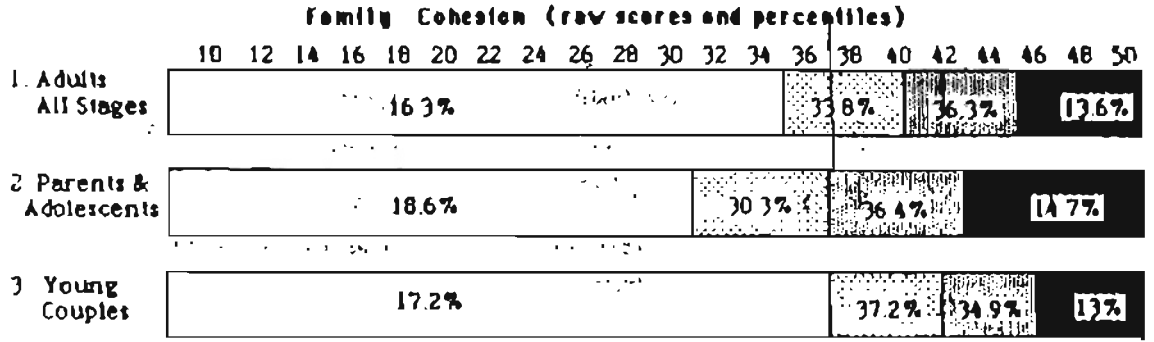
EVALUATION: _____
(Pre/Post/FL)

GLOBAL COHESION: _____

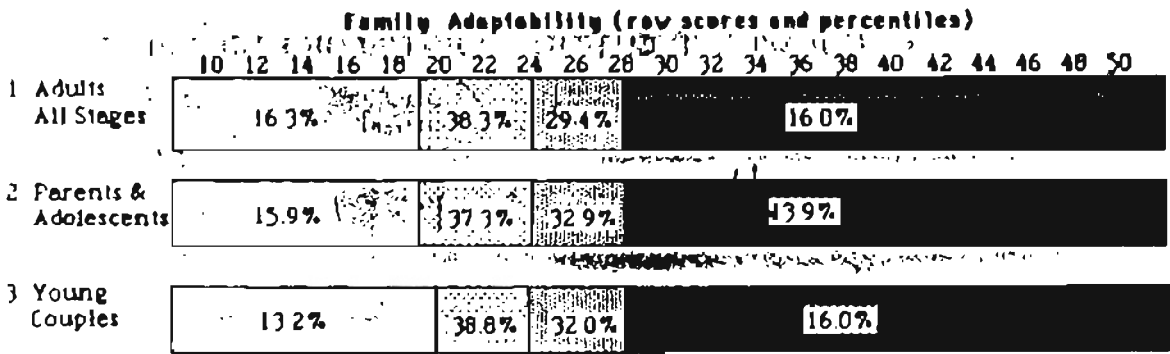
GLOBAL CHANGE: _____

GLOBAL COMMUNICATION: _____

NORMS AND CUTTING POINTS FOR FOUR LEVELS OF COHESION AND ADAPTABILITY



Disengaged Separated Connected Emmeshed



Rigid



Structured



Flexible



Chaotic



Appendix D

Sample interview questions

Family Interviews

1. What is family recreation like in your family?
 - How often?
 - Who Participates?
 - What activities do you do?
 - When do you participate?
2. What are some of the challenges to family recreation for your family?
 - Schedules
 - Interests.
 - Skill levels.
 - Resources
 - Lack of satisfaction
3. What are the outcomes of family recreation for your family?
 - Arguing.
 - Closeness.
4. Who in your family initiates or plans family recreation activities?
 - Mother.
 - Father
 - Children

:

Individual Interviews

1. What is family recreation like in your family?
 - How often do you participate?
 - What do you do?
 - When do you participate?
 - Who participates?
2. How does family recreation influence the connection between members of your family?
 - Which relationships?
 - What is different?
 - How do you notice the differences?
3. How does family recreation influence your family's ability to deal with change?
 - Stress?
 - Problems?
4. What is the process of family recreation like in your family?
 - Who plans activities?
 - Who carries out the plan?
 - How does your family decide what to do?
 - Do you look forward to family activities?
 - Do you enjoy family activities?
5. How has your participation in the leisure education sessions influenced your experience of family recreation?
 - How often do you participate now?
 - What do you do?
 - When do you participate?
 - Who do you participate with?

Appendix E

Leisure Education Intervention

While the content and goals of the sessions are firmly identified, specific activities may differ based upon the needs and interests of the families. All sessions will follow the same basic format:

1. Icebreaker (Simple activity to prepare the participants for the session).
2. Goal directed activities (1-3).
3. Homework assignment.

SESSIONS

1. Communication skills

During this session, participants will be instructed in the use of reflective listening skills, verbal and nonverbal communication, and in making appropriate requests. The activities implemented in this session will focus on teaching these skills and will also illustrate the importance of clearly communicating individual thoughts and feelings to other family members

Icebreaker: Name that Emotion

Each participant in this activity will have a card with a word describing an emotion taped to his or her back. The objective of the game is to correctly guess the word on the card. The participants are not allowed to speak except to guess the word on their card. Each player will assist the other players by acting out the emotion on the cards until each person correctly identifies their word.

Activity: Describe a Diagram

For this activity, participants will be paired with a partner. Each person will sit back-to-back with his or her partner. One person from each partnership will be given a simple diagram, and the other will be given a piece of paper and a pencil. The participant with the diagram begins describing what the diagram looks like, while the other partner begins drawing his/her perception of the given information. The participants who are drawing are not allowed to ask any questions or make any comments. After the drawing is completed, partners will reverse their roles with a new diagram. This time, however, the person drawing the diagram will be allowed to interact with his/her partner.

Following the activity, participants will be asked to discuss their experience highlighting the importance of listening carefully to instructions, and asking appropriate questions.

Homework: Practice listening and communication skills

(A) Communication

Activity: Deserted Island

For this activity, participants are asked to imagine that they have become stranded on a deserted island. They are given a number of random items that have “washed up on the beach.” They are then instructed to use all of the items to make a signal to help searchers locate their party. In order to create an effective signal, each member of the group must be actively involved in the process of developing the signal and signaling the airplanes. During the entire process, participants will be required to practice the

paraphrasing skills that have been introduced in the sessions.

Homework: Continue to practice communication skills

2. Self awareness and respect for others

The second session will focus on helping family members identify their personal interests and preferences for leisure participation. Family members will also be guided through the process of developing an awareness of their own attitudes and values about family recreation and leisure, and will be encouraged to discuss their beliefs and attitudes about family leisure participation with the other members of the family. Respect for the ideas and opinions of others that may have different communication styles and values will also be stressed.

Icebreaker: What Kind of Person are You?

Participants are shown a list of objects and are asked to choose one item from the list that best represents themselves. Participants will then be asked to discuss similarities and differences between individuals.

Activity: Teen LeisureScope.

The Teen LeisureScope activity was designed to assist participants in the process of identifying their personal leisure interests and their motivation for leisure participation. During the activity, the participants are shown a number of slides with representing different types of leisure activities. Participants are then shown two slides at a time and are asked to compare the activities and determine which activities they like better. After each comparison, the participants are asked to determine the extent to which they prefer the one slide over the other on a three point scale ranging from 'a little more,' to 'a lot

more.' Once this determination is made, participants complete a worksheet which, when completed, will identify the participant's leisure preferences and motivation for participation in the form of a bar graph.

Homework: Participants will be asked to keep a daily record of their personal leisure participation. This record should include the activities that they participate in and who they participate in these activities with.

3. Family cohesion and compromise

Activities in this session will provide family members with the opportunity to participate in activities as a family. Participants will be asked to examine their perception of families in general, and their perceptions of their own families. The activities and discussion during the session will emphasize the importance of working together to strengthen family ties through joint participation in leisure activities. In addition, this session will also focus on the importance of developing social relationships outside of the family and balancing these relationships with family relationships. Finally, the importance of compromise in the development and maintenance of relationships will be emphasized. The activities that will be included in this session will also provide participants with opportunities to improve and practice their communication skills.

Icebreaker: Family Sculpture

In this activity, the participant families are asked to create a 'family sculpture' representing the functioning of their family using only their bodies. Discussion will focus on the similarities and differences in the views of individual family members.

Activity: Game in a bag

Each participant family will be given a paper bag filled with a number of miscellaneous objects that could be useful in the development of a game. Participants will be instructed to use every object in the bag to create a new game that they will have the opportunity to play. Each family member will be required to suggest and accept one rule, and each rule must be agreed upon by 75% of the group. After the activity, discussion will focus on whether the groups cooperated toward the goal of creating a common game, how decisions were made and by whom, and how much the family members communicated with one another.

Homework: Develop another game during the week.

4. Problem solving skills

The fourth session will focus on helping family members to develop problem-solving skills that they can use in the process of planning and implementing family activities that can more effectively meet the needs of all family members. Participants will be instructed to use brainstorming techniques in order to generate options or solutions to their problems. Participants will also be guided through the process of evaluating the requirements of a given situation, identifying available resources, and predicting outcomes. These activities will also allow participants to practice their communication and compromise skills.

Icebreaker: Order from Chaos

Each participant will be given a handout including a list of tasks that must be accomplished during the activity. Each task on the list must be completed, and the first

person finished is the winner. However, participants are not allowed to complete the tasks on their own lists, they must ask someone else to complete their tasks for them. Additionally, the same person may complete no more than three of the tasks on any given list.

Activity: Group Brainstorming

Families will be given several pieces of paper with scenarios on them. The families will be given five to ten minutes to come up with a list of solutions to the problems or situations through the brainstorming method. Participants will be encouraged to be creative and imaginative with their responses and to come up with as many solutions as possible. During the brainstorming phase of this activity, evaluation of the responses is prohibited. After the brainstorming phase is complete, participants will be asked to look at each idea and analyze whether or not it is a feasible solution or answer to the problem situation. Finally, each participant family is to decide on the best answer or solution to the problem, and present their solution to the entire group.

Following the activity, discussion will focus on the appropriateness of the solutions, how each family came to a consensus and determined what was appropriate. Also, they will be asked how the use of brainstorming helped them to come up with new ideas, how brainstorming can be used in their future lives, and how evaluating alternatives helps to make better decisions.

Homework: Brainstorm potential family recreation activities, evaluate the requirements for these activities and choose one activity that they would like to do as a family.

5. Coping skills and strategies

This session will begin with a discussion about the strategies that participants currently use to deal with the stress in their leisure and in the rest of their lives. The purpose of this discussion is to enhance the individual participants' awareness of their personal reactions to stress in their lives. Stress management techniques and time management skills such as cognitive restructuring and overcoming "all or nothing thinking" will be presented and demonstrated. Emotional management techniques such as relaxed breathing and counting meditation will also be a part of this session. Finally, the influence that the effective implementation of these skills can have on family functioning and the potential that leisure participation can have for reducing stress will be emphasized.

Activity: Skills training

There are basically four ways of dealing with stressful events in our lives. Of these four methods, only three represent effective means of stress management. The fourth, escape or avoidance is ineffective as it only presents a temporary escape from stressors. The three positive coping strategies include changing contexts, thoughts, and feelings.

In order to change the context, the individual must first recognize what he or she can actually change. Once the changeable aspects of the context are identified, the individual can take steps to change those things around them that create stress.

The stress response is triggered by how we think about the events in our lives. Much of the discomfort that we experience is associated with our own irrational thoughts.

Changing the way that we think about the events in our lives can serve to reduce the discomfort that we experience as stress. This can be accomplished through positive self-talk and by changing pessimistic thinking patterns.

We can also learn to change our physiological response to stress by learning various relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, relaxation, exercise, meditation, and relaxing activity. This session will focus mostly on relaxed breathing and breath counting meditation.

Homework: Practice the skills that they have learned during the following week and keep a journal of their experiences.

6. Leisure planning skills

The final session is designed to help families to plan activities using communication skills, self awareness, compromise, problem solving skills, and coping skills that have been developed in previous sessions. The activities in this session will guide participant families to use these new skills as they plan and carry out family recreation experiences that are designed to meet the needs of all family members. Furthermore, the activities in this session will help the participants to identify leisure resources in the community and to increase their ability to use reference guides for leisure participation. All family members will be encouraged to take an active role in the planning and preparation of activities, and in sharing the responsibility for the success of the experience. The goal of

this session is to help families develop the necessary leisure planning skills to use what they have learned to improve the quality of their recreation and leisure activities.

Activity: Where's that Leisure?

Participants will be divided into two teams of approximately five people, with one person on each team acting as a group secretary. The facilitator will name one environment in which leisure may occur, and each team will then generate as many leisure activities within each environment as possible within a two-minute time limit. Each environment represents one round of play, and the team with the most activities at the end of five rounds wins.

Activity: A Family Outing

The participant families will be asked to plan a special family activity that they would be willing to do together during the coming week. They must determine where they will go (including transportation), what they will do, and the cost for the activity. As they plan the activity, they will be asked to record the name of the place that they will go, including the telephone number of the establishment, and any other important information (Fees, hours of operation, etc.). All members of the family must agree on the activity and be included in the planning process. After all families have completed their plans, they will be asked to share their plan with the rest of the group.

The discussion after the completion of the activity will focus on the feasibility of the plans, why the activities were chosen, and the similarities and differences between individual family members.

Homework: Follow through on the plans made during the session.

Appendix F

Leisure Education Session Schedule

Session Dates		
1. Interviews	September 23	(Families 1, 2, & 3)
2. Communication skills (1)	September 30	(Families 2 & 3)
3. Communication skills (1A)	October 6	(Families 2 & 3)
4. Self-awareness/Respect for others (2)	October 21	(Families 3 & 4)
5. Family cohesion/compromise (3)	November 11	(Families 3 & 4)
6. Family cohesion/compromise (3A)	November 22	(Family 2)
7. Problem solving skills (4)	November 17	(Families 2 & 3)
8. Problem solving skills (4A)	November 22	(Family 4)
9. Coping Skills (5)	November 25	(Families 2 & 4)
10. Coping Skills (5A)	December 2	(Family 3)
11. Leisure planning skills (6)	December 2	(Families 2, 3, & 4)
12. Individual interviews	December 5	(Families 3 & 4)
13. Individual interviews	December 9	(Family 2)

Appendix G

Institutional Review Board Form

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 7/25/01

Date: Wednesday, July 26, 2000

IRB Application No. ED00265

Proposal Title: FAMILIES AND LEISURE EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Principal
Investigator(s)

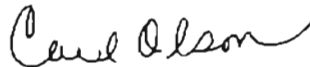
Eric D. Howes
201 S. Hartford
Stillwater, OK 74076

Colleen Hood
108 Colvin Center
Stillwater, OK 74076

Reviewed and
Processed as: Expedited (Spec Pop)

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature



Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Wednesday, July 26, 2000

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Eric Dale Howes

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: FAMILIES AND LEISURE EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Major Field: Health, Physical Education, and Leisure

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Ely, Nevada, on February 6, 1970, the son of Nolan and Daisy Howes.

Education: Graduated from White Pine County High School, Ely, Nevada in June 1998; received Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah in August, 1995. Received a Master of Science degree in Family Science from Oklahoma State University in May, 2000. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Leisure Studies at Oklahoma State University in May, 2001.

Experience: Worked as a member of summer camp and high adventure camp staff member for the Boy Scouts of America in 1987. Employed by the City of Stillwater, Oklahoma Department of Parks, Events, and Recreation as a Park Maintenance worker. Employed by Oklahoma State University, as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Family Science Department from 1997-1999; and in the School of Applied Health and Educational Psychology from 1999-2001.

Professional Memberships: National Recreation and Park Association, Utah Recreation and Parks Association.