

Controversies and Contradictions in Family Leisure: An Analysis of Conflicting Paradigms

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Researchers interested in the family as a context for leisure experiences and activities are faced with the difficult and controversial question of how to conceptualize family leisure in terms of factors such as experience, motivation and outcome. In this paper it is argued that the controversies surrounding family leisure research are due primarily to conflicting theoretical paradigms employed by researchers, reflecting different basic assumptions about the family and about gender relations in society. Two broad theoretical paradigms are identified, a social-psychological paradigm and a sociological-feminist paradigm. The strengths and weaknesses of these two approaches are discussed. It is suggested that conceptualizing family leisure as inherently contradictory allows for more inclusive theorizing in which the insights of both paradigmatic approaches can be incorporated. Adopting this conceptualization for future family leisure research may enhance a broader and more inclusive understanding of this important phenomenon.

KEYWORDS: *Family leisure, conflicting paradigms, inherent contradictions*

Introduction

The term "family leisure" is widely used in the North American context. It is part of everyday language, referring primarily to time that parents and children spend together in free time or recreational activities. It is also a term used with increasing frequency by scholars in the leisure studies field. The adoption of this term seems to reflect growing recognition that leisure is not an isolated aspect of life, but is inextricably connected to social context and daily life experiences. Free time and leisure do not occur in a social vacuum, and the most common social context for free time activities, at least among married people, is the family (Kelly, 1983, 1993; Kinsley & Graves, 1983; Shaw, in press).

The concept of family leisure appears to be applicable in other cultural contexts as well. Both Hantrais (1982) and Samuel (1992) have looked at the importance of family leisure in France, and other researchers have examined the same phenomenon in the Netherlands (Te Kloeze, 1993), in Poland (Parnicka, 1995) and in the United Kingdom (McCabe, 1993). In addition, Samuel's (1996) book on family leisure gathers information on family leisure from a range of different countries including Japan, Colombia, Morocco, Israel and India.

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Given the wide usage of this term, it would be reasonable to expect that there is a commonly agreed upon meaning of the concept of family leisure. However, this does not seem to be the case, and there are a number of difficulties that researchers face in determining how to conceptualize family leisure for both theoretical and empirical purposes. First, an issue that affects all family researchers is the definition of the family. While the majority of family research has focused on heterosexual married couples with children, it is becoming increasingly evident that researchers need to take account of the diversity of family types in modern society (Allen & Demo, 1995). This would include single parent families, gay and lesbian families, blended and non-custodial families, and families without children (see Acock & Demo, 1994 and Cheal, 1991). To date, very few studies have looked at family leisure in "non-traditional" families (Shaw, 1992a), and the implicit assumption seems to be that the concept of family leisure is applicable only to families with children.

Apart from this initial problem of whether to include different family types, leisure researchers also face additional challenges in defining the concept of leisure within the family. While family leisure typically is used to refer to activities that different family members participate in together, differences are evident among researchers about the relevance of the experience associated with such participation. Does the term family leisure imply not only that all family members are involved in the same activity, but also that they all experience the situation subjectively as leisure? That is, does it suggest that family leisure activities are mutually enjoyable, valued and satisfying? The data from research on family activities suggest that such an assumption is problematic. While there is evidence that family activities are considered important and are highly valued by parents (Kelly, 1983; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Horna, 1989; Samuel, 1993), other research suggests that such activities do not always live up to the leisure ideal (Miller, 1995). Family activities can be experienced as an added burden of work, including "emotion work," especially by women (Erickson, 1993; Shaw, 1992b). Moreover, these work components of family leisure may be hidden by the ideology of familism which idealizes family experiences and interactions (Hunter & Whitson, 1991). Thus, to include only positive family leisure experiences is problematic empirically as well as theoretically.

A related point of difficulty in identifying family leisure is the issue of motivation. While leisure is often conceptualized as intrinsically motivated activity which is neither instrumental nor goal-oriented (e.g., Neulinger, 1981), family activities may not necessarily fit this criterion. They may be "relational leisure" in some situations, where the focus is on social interaction with family members, but where considerable freedom of choice is maintained (Kelly, 1983). Or, family leisure may be role-determined, obligatory participation based on expectations about family roles and responsibilities (Kelly, 1983, 1993). Some writers implicitly suggest that family leisure is, or should be, obligatory: that is, that parents should feel obligated to participate in family activities with children (e.g., Parnicka, 1995), and others have dis-

cussed family free time activities as "semi-leisure" associated with parental, and especially maternal, role obligations (Horna, 1989; Freysinger, 1994). Taking the argument of maternal obligation further, other researches have pointed to the ways in which women put considerable work and energy into creating family leisure experiences for their partners/husbands and children, thereby excluding the possibility of leisure for themselves (Bella, 1992). This raises the issue, then, of whether obligatory, work-like situations should be included under the umbrella of "family leisure" or not.

A third issue that has divided researchers interested in family leisure is the question of outcomes. The main focus of family related leisure research has been on the beneficial outcomes of family activities, such as improved communication among family members, higher quality of family relationships and enhanced family cohesiveness (e.g., see Orthner & Mancini, 1990). Indeed, outcomes of family activities are often conceptualized as "benefits" based on the assumption of a positive directional outcome (Orthner & Mancini, 1992). On the other hand, others have pointed out that there can also be negative outcomes to family activities such as increased family conflict or family workload stress (Rosenblatt, Titus, Nevaldine, & Cunningham, 1979; Shaw, 1992b). Family activities can also act as constraints on individual leisure and autonomous leisure, especially for mothers (Harrington, Dawson, & Bolla, 1992; Samuel, 1992).

These controversies surrounding research on leisure and the family can be seen to represent different ways of conceptualizing family leisure or different assumptions about the nature of family leisure. These differences will not necessarily be solved by expanding the pool of empirical research studies. This is because conceptual assumptions and methodology are inter-related, and different methodologies can lead to quite different research findings. For example, research on the benefits of family leisure is likely to fail to reveal conflictual or negative outcomes of family participation. Similarly, if researchers focus on the conflicts, stress and self-denial associated with family activities, the significance and value that parents place on such activities may remain hidden.

The argument presented in this paper is that rather than seeking to solve these controversies empirically, attention needs to be directed, first, to the conceptual frameworks that are used to understand family leisure. The differences of opinion about experiences, motivations and outcomes are not simply definitional or methodological. Rather, at a more fundamental level, they are due to the conflicting theoretical underpinnings or paradigms that are employed by researchers in this area. Whether family leisure research uses an explicit theory or not, research studies can be seen to rest on different basic assumptions about the family, about social roles within the family, and about gender relations and the impact of broader social structural factors on the family.

This paper focuses on two broad paradigms that are commonly used in family leisure research. The first, and most widely used paradigm, is a social psychological approach that focuses on interactions in the family, and on

the positive benefits of leisure for improved relationships and communication among family members. The second paradigm is more sociological in approach because it locates the family within the broader patriarchal system. The emphasis here is on how societal gender relations affect the expression and experience of leisure within the family. While any categorization of paradigms is an over-simplification, at least to some extent, it is argued that most research on family leisure can be seen to fall into one or other of these two broad groupings.

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, the purpose is to identify and describe the two main paradigms applied to the analysis of family leisure. This is done through a discussion of the different assumptions and approaches used by researchers working within each paradigm. The second purpose is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of these two identified paradigms. The third purpose is to suggest ways in which family leisure might be more usefully conceptualized by researchers through the incorporation of insights from both paradigmatic approaches. This more inclusive approach to theorizing leads to suggestions about ways in which future empirical research on family leisure might proceed that will enhance a broader and more inclusive understanding of this important phenomenon.

Identifying Conflicting Paradigms

The dominant social psychological paradigm used in family leisure research focuses on the family as a system of social interaction. The family is seen to be the primary location for the development and expression of significant social relationships (Bahr, 1991; Ishwaran, 1988; Kelly, 1993). It is also seen as the main agent of socialization, responsible not only for children's emotional and psycho-social development, but also for facilitating adult transitions across the life course (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975).

Applying this micro-level paradigm to family leisure has led to research on the effect of family activities on intra-familial relationships. Although causal relationships are difficult to prove empirically, the research from this perspective has shown that family leisure activities are associated with positive family interaction. For example, joint activities of married couples have been shown to be associated with increased marital satisfaction (Hawks, 1991; Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Orthner, 1975), and improved communications and positive relational affect (Hill, 1988; Orthner, 1976; Orthner & Mancini, 1990). Family activities are also believed to have a positive effect on the psycho-social development of both young children and adolescents (Orthner, Barnett-Morris, & Mancini, 1993). In addition, although the effect on marital stability is difficult to document, Hill (1988) found that shared time between husbands and wives was a positive predictor of marital stability five years later.

Some consideration has been given to the type and interactional context of family activities. That is, attention has been given to the differential effect of "joint" activities, where family members actively interact, versus "parallel" activities, such as television watching, where little interaction occurs, or in-

dividual activities that do not involve other family members. The research has shown joint activities to have the greatest benefit in terms of family interaction and marital satisfaction (Orthner, 1975). Parallel activities are less likely to influence marital attachments, and high levels of individual leisure of married people seem to have a negative impact on marital relationships (Hawks, 1991).

It can be seen from this brief review that the emphasis of research within this paradigm is on the benefits of leisure activities for families and for individual family members. Family leisure is seen as a bond of mutual interests and expressions that tie families together. The assumption seems to be that family leisure is a mutually positive and beneficial experience. There is also an implicit assumption that family leisure is desired and represents freely chosen participation, although researchers in this tradition have not directed much attention towards empirical investigation of the experience or motivation for such participation. The types of families studied by researchers are typically married couples with children, although Orthner et al. (1993) have also looked at the leisure of families at different stages of the life cycle. In general, the focus is on the positive outcomes (benefits) of family leisure among "traditional" two-parent families.

The types of theoretical frameworks that inform the research within this dominant paradigm include exchange theory, family development theory and systems theory (Orthner & Mancini, 1992). All of these theories focus on interpersonal interaction among family members, although differential emphasis is placed on the developmental and socialization tasks of families, and on establishing family boundaries and enhancing cohesiveness. These social psychology theories are also based on the assumption of balance within families: that is, that balance is the norm, and that lack of balance indicates a problem or dysfunctional family. This assumption of balance is especially evident in exchange theory which is based on the conceptualization of family interactions as equal and opposite exchanges between family members (Carlson, 1979). Thus researchers within this paradigm either implicitly or explicitly make the assumption that power is equally shared within the family between the husband and wife, even though the specific roles for fathers and mothers are not expected to be the same. Applying this assumption of equity and balance to the issue of family leisure means that family activities are not expected to be unequal or oppressive, and that differences between male and female experiences are not generally explored.

In contrast, the alternate sociological family leisure paradigm puts primary emphasis on the impact of societal gender relations on the family and individual family members. Within this perspective, the family is seen to be part of, and inseparable from, the patriarchal organization of society (see Cheal, 1991). Thus the family is thought to reflect dominant hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity, and to represent male privilege and power. Following the writings of Jessie Bernard in the 1970s (Bernard, 1973), researchers within this tradition do not assume a commonality of experience in marriage. Rather, emphasis is put on the importance of recognizing "his"

and "her" marriages, and on exploring the separate experiences of wives and husbands, and fathers and mothers, within the family (Eichler, 1983).

Researchers working within this paradigm do not assume that power differentials are overt or evident. While there is some empirical research that provides evidence of male power in heterosexual relationships including marriage (Close, 1989; Felmlee, 1994; Scanzoni, 1982), such inequality is not always experienced as powerlessness by wives (O'Connor, 1991). This may reflect an ideological effect, in that concepts of masculinity and femininity may mask the lack of choice and restrictive gender role expectations for both genders, and also hide the inferiorization of women's status (Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1990). In addition, familist ideologies which idealize the traditional family and traditional roles within the family are also seen to mask gender-based inequities between wives and husbands (Anderson, 1987; Green & Hebron, 1988).

This paradigmatic approach adopts a primarily macro-level perspective on the family. It applies a cultural analysis of the impact of societal structures, organization and ideologies to family relationships and activities. Researchers base their analyses on feminist theory or on other related critical theory approaches such as cultural theory, theories of ideology, Marxist- or socialist-feminism (Close, 1989; Green et al., 1990; Keohane, Rosaldo, & Gelpi, 1982; Mandell & Duffy, 1988; Pahl, 1984). Applying this perspective to family leisure means that emphasis is put on exposing and analyzing inequality and oppression within the family. There is no assumption that family leisure will necessarily have positive outcomes, nor that it will be experienced similarly by different family members.

Feminist and critical theory research on family leisure has looked at ways in which familism and ideologies about femininity have restricted women's leisure (Green et al., 1990; Hunter & Whitson, 1991). These ideological structures are seen to impact on women's lives by reducing their options for leisure and by encouraging women to put their children's and husband's leisure needs before their own (Harrington et al., 1992). Ideologies are shown to impact on everyday family activities as well as on special occasions such as holidays, birthdays and Christmas celebrations (Bella, 1992; Deem, 1986). The focus of the research is on the negative impact of women's "ethic of care" on their own opportunities for leisure (Henderson & Allen, 1991; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996). Other research in this tradition has indicated that family activities are often experienced as "work" rather than "leisure" by parents, especially by mothers (Shaw, 1992b), and that fathers gain greater satisfaction from family leisure activities than do mothers (Freysinger, 1994).

It can be seen, then, that researchers within this paradigm do not make the assumption that family leisure is always experienced positively, that motivations are intrinsic or that outcomes are beneficial. On the contrary, family leisure is typically conceptualized as a problem or a burden for women, even though the work component may be hidden and thus remain unrecognized by the participants themselves. There have been only a few empirical studies

on possible negative outcomes of family leisure. One study by Rosenblatt and his colleagues (1979) looked at conflict between family members on summer vacations, and a related study investigated the relationship between television watching and family conflict (Rosenblatt & Cunningham, 1976). In addition, it has been suggested that family leisure may have a negative impact on women's lives through the reproduction and reinforcement of traditional power-based gender relations (Shaw, 1994). Thus, although there is less empirical research from this perspective, there is no assumption that outcomes of family leisure will be beneficial.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Competing Paradigms

It can be seen that the two competing paradigms are based on very different assumptions about and conceptualizations of family leisure. It is not surprising, then, that researchers from these two different perspectives come to very different conclusions about the nature of family leisure. These two perspectives also have different strengths and weaknesses.

The strength of the interactional paradigm has been the documentation of the effect of family activities on family interactions and levels of communication. It is also clear from this body of research that family leisure is highly valued by parents and spouses. The major weakness, though, has been the failure, in much of this research, to recognize the significance of gender and to locate the family within the broader social system. This means that scant attention has been paid to men's and women's differential experiences of family and of family leisure, and benefits of participation are often discussed uncritically and assumed to accrue to both mothers and fathers, or to all family members. Despite research on power differentials among heterosexual couples, the idea of gender inequity is typically not incorporated either theoretically or methodologically into this body of research.

As a result, research within this paradigm has led to only a partial understanding of family leisure. The work component of family leisure remains relatively ignored, as well as possible negative consequences of participation such as constraints on individual leisure or family stress of conflict. Even when there is some empirical evidence of increased family conflict during shared leisure activities, there is a tendency for researchers to downplay the possible negative consequences. For example, Orthner and Mancini (1980) found that shared activities can lead to increases in both positive and negative (conflictual) communication, but they suggest that these different forms of communication together "serve as healthy mechanisms for reducing family tensions and disagreements" (Orthner et al., 1993, p. 187). Thus, the issue of unhealthy communication and the potential for physical conflict is not addressed.

A related weakness of the interactional approach is the failure to recognize ideological aspects of family leisure. While family leisure may be highly valued, the idealization of shared activities leads parents, and perhaps researchers too, to ignore what Eichler calls "the ugly aspects of familial

interactions" (1983, p. 54). In this respect, research on family leisure is not different from other research on families which has traditionally focused on the positive and functional aspects of families, and, until recently, has not paid much attention to issues of family conflict, violence, wife battering or child abuse (Cheal, 1991; Guberman & Wolfe, 1985).

The weaknesses of the interactional paradigm can be seen to be the strengths of the sociological-feminist paradigm approach to research on family leisure. In this latter paradigm, attention has been directed primarily to the influence of power-based gender relations (Lipman-Blumen, 1984), and this has led to examination of women's experiences of family leisure and women's oppression within the family.

However, this paradigm also displays certain weaknesses as well. There is a tendency for some researchers within this tradition to downplay some of the positive aspects of family leisure, just as researchers in the dominant social-psychology tradition sometimes downplay possible negative aspects. For example, in her book about women's experiences of Christmas traditions and celebrations, Bella (1992) suggests that the term leisure may be irrelevant for women and that family leisure is, in reality "women's work." While the work component of family leisure is evident in this and other research, seeing all family leisure as part of women's oppression fails to recognize the importance that women attach to children and to families, and ignores the positive outcomes and satisfactions they can and do gain from such activities in a variety of different situations.

The sociological-feminist paradigm of family leisure has also given scant attention to men's and children's experiences of family leisure. Given the inferiorization of women within the family (Green et al., 1990), it is logical that the initial focus of critical research would be on women's experiences. Nevertheless, there is relatively little analysis of men's experiences of family leisure, or of the extent to which the work associated with family activities is shared by fathers. Even less attention has been paid to children's experiences of family leisure. While researchers from the social interactional paradigm have noted the developmental benefits of family activities for children and adolescents, the critical issues facing children such as the choice-obligation dichotomy and the possibility of negative as well as positive outcomes for children have not been addressed.

A further weakness of both paradigms is the failure to take into account the question of diversity among families. Family activities in "non-traditional" families such as single-parent families, blended or non-custodial families, gay or lesbian families or families without children have received almost no attention by researchers in either paradigmatic tradition. One exception has been the recent research by Bialeschki and Pearce (1995) showing the significance of leisure for lesbian families. One of the positive outcomes of family leisure for these families was shown to be the establishment of a sense of identity and autonomy as a lesbian family in a heterosexist society. In this cultural context, family leisure was not experienced as oppressive by the women, but had the potential to act as a site of cultural resistance.

This example suggests that other types of families may also experience family leisure in different ways. Levels of inequity may vary considerably in different types of family, and while family leisure is not always beneficial and ideal, it is clearly not always oppressive either. This new research on lesbian families also suggests the need to examine the role of family leisure in families from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Social class, race and ethnicity as well as geographic and physical location may also impact upon the experiences, motivations and outcomes of family activities (Gardner, 1991). Recognition of diversity means recognition that family leisure and the outcomes of family leisure are likely to be practised and experienced in a wide variety of ways.

Towards an Inclusive Conceptualization of Family Leisure

The two paradigms described earlier present views of family leisure that are clearly disparate. In one view family leisure is characterized as a bond of mutual interests and expressions that tie families together, while the alternate view sees family leisure as one component of the system of gender-based inequity and unequal power within the family. Nevertheless, given the strengths and weaknesses of each paradigm, an approach which incorporates the insights from each would seem to have potential usefulness.

One way to incorporate these two perspectives is to conceptualize family leisure as inherently contradictory. Moreover, there are several levels on which such contradictions can be seen to occur. First, there is a dialectical or contradictory relationship between the social structure of family roles and responsibilities and individual freedom or action in leisure (Kelly, 1993). Thus, for example, becoming a parent is likely to lead to a decrease in "pure leisure" and an increase in "role-determined leisure" (Kelly, 1983), and these role-determined activities, with their obligatory connotations, may or may not be experienced as leisure. Second, on the ideological level, and following the Marxist usage of the notion, there is a contradiction between inequalities and oppression in society and the ideologies which conceal such inequities (Close, 1989; Green et al., 1990). Examination of the dominant "pro-family" ideology, or familism, reveals contradictions, overt or hidden, between images of the ideal family and the reality of family for many married couples (Miller, 1995). For example, pro-family ideology emphasizes togetherness and joint activities, but this may hide violent and abusive interactions (Eichler, 1986). Familism also incorporates the "society-wide belief that 'gayness' and family are mutually exclusive concepts" (Allen & Demo, 1995, p. 112). Thus lesbian and gay families feel excluded from the community of heterosexual families (Bialeschki & Pearce, 1995). Third, because of these dominant ideologies of the family, individuals may face a contradiction between their initial expectations about family life and their actual lived experience. When marital relationships are based on "romantic love" between partners and an expectation of equality and justice (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993), the impact of unequal societal gender relations on marriage partners is typically not anticipated, and may lead to conflictual feelings about family

activities. Fourth, on the level of individual experience, family leisure can incorporate contradictory meanings and emotions simultaneously. That is, family activities may be leisure and work at the same time, motivations may be a complex mix of intrinsic and obligatory factors, and both positive and negative outcomes may result from any one family leisure situation (Shaw, 1992a; Shaw, 1992b).

Because of these diverse ways in which contradictory aspects of family leisure can manifest themselves, to conceptualize family leisure as contradictory is to *expect* positive and negative aspects to coexist. Indeed, the coexistence of positive and negative components in family leisure should not be surprising for a number of additional reasons as well. The family represents individuals' closest and most intimate relationships. The intensity of involvement between family members, including both adult-partner relationships and parent-child relationships, means that investment in such relationships is extremely high. As a result, the emotions associated with such relationships are intense, but may be either very positive or very negative, conflictual and distressing, or rewarding and satisfying. There is also a tension in terms of the voluntary or involuntary nature of such relationships. In North America and in many other societies adult-partner relationships (including marital relationships) are usually initially voluntary. But they also contain some non-voluntary or obligatory aspects as well, because economic, legal and emotional constraints may make divorce or separation either impractical or impossible (Eichler, 1983). As Eichler points out in her discussion of factors that contribute to violence within families:

[these factors demonstrate] the paradoxical nature of family relationships: the very factors that make intimacy between family members possible also make violence between family members likely. In the emotional, as well as in all other dimensions of familial relationships, intensity of interaction ranges from one extreme to the other (1983, p. 57).

Family leisure activities, perhaps more than any other family activities, best exemplify the contradictory nature of familial relationships. Leisure activities typically involve high expectations about the quality of the experience, and the level of involvement, the time spent together, and the intensity of interaction between family members may be higher than in other types of activity. For example, day trips and family vacations involve extended time periods together and high expectations about family togetherness and shared activities (Samuel, 1993). However, the range and diverse nature of interests and skills among family members may also be high, making common, mutually satisfying activities difficult to find (Orthner & Herron, 1984). Moreover, the societal view that family members have a right to influence each other (Hotaling & Straus, 1980) may increase expectations about the behaviour of family members, and exacerbate dissatisfaction over undesirable behaviours.

All of these considerations support the expectation of contradictory experiences associated with family leisure activities. They further suggest that inclusive theorizing, which incorporates diverse and contradictory aspects of

family life, may be a particularly important consideration for analysis of leisure and the family. Indeed, family leisure may be an ideal topic for exploration of the usefulness of this type of multi-paradigmatic thinking. The high valuation and potential beneficial outcomes of family leisure are evident, while at the same time ideologies that hide basic problems and inequities may be particularly powerful in the leisure context. It is possible, then, that research on the contradictory nature of family leisure may be important not only for analyzing leisure situations, but also for understanding family relationships and family dynamics in general.

Future Research on Family Leisure

Acceptance of the idea of family leisure as contradictory leads to specific suggestions for future research. First, it suggests the need to take gender and gender-related power differentials into account in any family-related research. This means recognizing that there is no single reality of family life, but that women and men have separate experiences of marriage and family. It also means that interactions or social exchanges between family members should not be seen as necessarily reflecting interactions between equals. Power-based gender relations in society influence the dynamics and decision-making processes within the family (Lipman-Blumen, 1984; Lips, 1991). It should be noted, though, that power itself can be contradictory (Close, 1989). Since power is a dynamic rather than static process, it is constantly being negotiated and re-negotiated. Thus the power located in individual action needs to be taken into account as well as the power associated with social location (Foucault, 1983).

Second, there is a clear need for research to examine both the positive and negative aspects of family leisure, and to actively and deliberately explore possible contradictions. For example, researchers should explore not only satisfactions associated with family activities, but also dissatisfactions. Satisfactions and dissatisfactions may be separate and independent continua and high (or low) levels on both dimensions may occur simultaneously. Other apparently contradictory experiential aspects may also coexist, such as enjoyment and frustration, pleasure and boredom, positive relational affect and inter-personal conflict. Similarly, both intrinsic motivations and obligations may be present at the same time for the same activity, and different types of motivation may be either complementary or conflictual. In addition, it is evident that the same family leisure activity can have both positive and negative outcomes and these can vary for different family members or can occur simultaneously for an individual family member. Researchers, therefore, need to be cognizant of these many ways in which contradictions can occur. To explore just one aspect of family leisure, whether this is the positive, beneficial aspect or the negative, oppressive aspect, is to gain only a partial understanding of this complex type of interaction.

Another potential avenue for research is to explore the contradictory aspects of family leisure for different family members. For example, women

may experience and report higher levels of contradiction than men because of the powerful societal messages directed towards women about the mothering role. In addition, a neglected aspect of family leisure is the impact of such activities on children and adolescents. Almost no data exist on the attitudes and reactions of children to family activities, nor of the outcomes, beneficial or otherwise, for these family members. Since children and adolescents have less decision-making power than parents, they may not always desire or freely-choose to participate. Thus, for this group too, family leisure may be a contradictory experience.

A third implication for future research is the need to look at diversity among families as well as within families. Researchers need to look beyond middle-class, two-parent, heterosexual families to explore the role of leisure in the wide range of different family types and structures that exist today. The type of family structure may well influence the experiences, motivations and outcomes associated with family leisure. While lesbian families may see family leisure as a way of gaining recognition as a family, single-parent families and blended families may have other needs and other concerns related to their participation in family activities. The experience of family leisure, and the contradictions associated with family activities, may also vary for individual members of families according to the type and structure of their family.

Recognizing diversity among families also implies looking at the different relationships that exist within different families. While unequal power may be evident in many relationships, this is not necessarily always the case. For example, research has shown that the distribution of household labor is affected by the power balance within the family, and by the gender role attitudes and pro-feminist beliefs of both wives and husbands (e.g., Antill & Cotton, 1988; Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Krausz, 1986). It seems logical to suggest, therefore, that attitudes and beliefs may also affect the motivations, outcomes, and level of contradictions experienced by women and men in family leisure situations.

In general, acceptance of the idea of inherent contradiction means that researchers should not fall prey to paradigmatic determinism, in which attention is paid to only one side (whether positive or negative) of family leisure. Instead, this approach will hopefully lead to a greater diversity of research questions and issues, and a broader understanding of family leisure as an important aspect of family life in contemporary society.

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