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## Articles

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### Leisure and Family: Perspectives of Male Adolescents Who Engage in Delinquent Activity as Leisure

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Little research has been carried out to date to investigate the family background of adolescents who choose delinquent rather than socially acceptable forms of leisure pursuit. This paper investigates the family background of male adolescents who engage in delinquent pursuits as their leisure including stability of the family structure, nature of relationships with parent(s), and aspects of leisure within the family unit. Multiple methods of data collection were used to examine these factors from the perspective of eight male youths with a history of involvement in delinquent activity as leisure. The findings indicated diversity in the structure and stability of the family unit, lack of a sense of attachment to parents, lack of shared family leisure experiences for adolescents beyond age 10, and a perceived lack of parental interest in a son's activities. Participants expressed a desire for more shared leisure experiences with parents, fathers in particular. These findings highlight the importance of the role of parents as leisure educators, providers and facilitators for their adolescent son's leisure, regardless of the nature of the family structure.

**KEYWORDS:** *Family leisure, delinquency, at-risk youth, societal trends*

#### Introduction

Acts of delinquency are often detrimental to both the individual and to society. Impacts on the individual relate to quality of life and the economic, social, and psychological costs associated with involvement in the justice system. Impacts on society have to do with the psychological and economic costs associated with personal safety, the protection of one's property, and the operation of justice and rehabilitation systems. As high as they may seem, the current statistics on delinquency show only the tip of the iceberg, with many such activities never being reported. Also, first time offenders are frequently given alternative sentencing, and many offenders are never apprehended (Rogers & Mays, 1987).

Only recently have motivations such as the pursuit of fun, thrills, and excitement been recognized as acceptable explanations for involvement in delinquent behavior (Agnew, 1990). Understanding the nature of delinquent

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experiences and the youth who engage in them is closely related to the original mission of the recreation and parks profession (Addams, 1909).

Existing leisure theory, particularly that in North America, focuses primarily upon experiences which are generally considered to be socially acceptable (Gunter & Gunter, 1980; Kelly, 1978; Neulinger, 1974; Samdahl, 1988). Little research has been conducted on activities seen as delinquent that are engaged in as leisure, or on adolescents who participate in such experiences. Cultural background, relationships with family members, dynamics of the family unit, and the nature of the social and economic environment in which the individual was raised are central to understanding adolescent behavior. An increased understanding of these and other contributing factors could prove valuable in understanding socially acceptable as well as delinquent forms of adolescent leisure behavior.

This study looked at young male adolescents who engaged in delinquent activities as their leisure. In particular, this paper will report data related to the nature of the families of these adolescents and the relationships that existed between these youth and their families. In order to understand the leisure choices of individuals, it is often necessary to look beyond the activity. In our society, the family is generally considered to be the primary socializing agent. As such, understanding the family dynamic is important in order to gain a better understanding of adolescents who make leisure choices that are detrimental to themselves and others. Research of this nature is not prevalent within the existing leisure literature.

The data reported in this paper were collected as part of a larger study of delinquent youth leisure that investigated why certain adolescents choose to engage in delinquent activities for fun, thrills, and excitement (Robertson, 1993). Results from the larger study indicated that participants considered their delinquent involvement to be leisure for them. Achieving a rush, release of stress, and the need for social connection were the primary motivations for engagement in delinquent activity.

## Literature Review

### *Negative Leisure*

Many authors have associated leisure with such benefits as the development of the body, mind, and spirit; learning, growth and expression; rest and restoration; and discovering life in its entirety (Dumazedier, 1967; Godbey, 1990; Kaplan, 1960; Kelly, 1983; Lee, 1964; Nash, 1960; Neulinger, 1974). When leisure, or more often recreation, has been linked to delinquency in the literature, it has been in a therapeutic context, with the hope that, through channeling delinquents into socially acceptable forms of leisure pursuits, the aforementioned benefits can be realized (Flynn, 1974; Kraus, 1973; Purdy & Richard, 1983; Seagrave, 1984; Teoff, 1972). This literature does not address the possibility that individuals may realize benefits through leisure activities that are not generally considered to be socially acceptable. It does imply however that having adolescents engage in socially acceptable leisure

is clearly desirable over having them engage in the delinquent activities, even though the participants may consider these activities to be their leisure.

In other words, leisure can be used for good or bad, to improve or destroy oneself, and to help or harm others (Brightbill, 1960). A number of authors have characterized involvement in delinquent acts as leisure experiences for the participants (Aguilar, 1987; Burke, 1940; Curtis, 1988; Richards, Berk, & Forester, 1979). Such experiences often involve substance abuse, vandalism, physical or sexual abuse of others, and a variety of other forms of delinquent and criminal activities.

The question as to whether delinquent activities can be considered leisure has been a topic of philosophical debate throughout the years, and is a debate that will continue. Nevertheless, to understand the conditions that foster adolescents choosing to engage in such activities is in need of further exploration, and hence, the purpose of this study. In particular, one condition that must be examined is the family background of these adolescents, the relationships that they have with their families, and the role and meaning of leisure to family members.

### *Delinquency and Family Research*

The nature of the family and the family experience has long been viewed as relevant in understanding adolescent delinquency. Perspectives on the relationship between family and delinquency in the literature have been based upon two assumptions. One assumption is that delinquency is somehow the product of family, that is, that aspects of family condition cause adolescents to engage in delinquent activities. The second assumption is that factors relating to family prevent adolescents from engaging in delinquent behavior.

Many early studies in criminology were conducted to explain the link between heredity and criminal, delinquent, or deviant behavior. These studies have generally been discredited as lacking sufficient methodological sophistication to permit any significant conclusions (Reid, 1991). However, criminologists have found the study of the family to be important in understanding youth delinquency as family is generally considered to be the primary agent for the socialization of children. They are the main source of attitude and values formation (Rogers & Mays, 1987).

The Gluecks spent years studying juvenile delinquency. Their principle study comparing 500 delinquent boys with 500 non-delinquent boys concluded that the nature of family relationships was the most importance difference between the two groups (Glueck & Glueck, 1950). Building upon the Gluecks' theory, but taking into account the unrecorded delinquency and diversity in socio-economic classes, Nye (1958) concluded that sense of attachment to the family was an important factor in determining the likelihood of delinquency. Another important factor was the degree to which parents helped foster success in school, sport, and peer relationships. More recently Nye (1989) concluded that if the needs of youth could be met ad-

equately and without delay in socially acceptable ways then the pressure to achieve them through delinquency is greatly diminished. Nye acknowledged that although all needs cannot be satisfied within the family, parents can greatly affect the opportunity for adolescents to satisfy their needs through acceptable means outside of the home.

In a study of 300 young offenders, Streit (1981) found that adolescents' perceptions of lack of love, lack of parental control, and parental hostility were positive predictors of delinquency. Robinson (1978) found that delinquent adolescent males described their fathers as being detached. They also perceived that their parents were not interested in their activities and that they withheld praise and encouragement. A seminal study of delinquency (Hawkins & Weis, 1985), conducted in the mid 1980's found that adolescents are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior when they regularly share in activities with their parents. Rather than parental control, it was the sense of attachment to parents and awareness of their caring that served as a deterrent to engagement in delinquent activity. In particular, the greater the communication of thoughts and feelings between father and son, the less likelihood there was of sons' involvement in delinquent activity.

There have been recent changes in family structures including increasing rates of divorce, single-parenthood, and the establishment of blended families. The impacts of these changes on the individuals, and the nature of relationships within the various family structures are currently being studied by numerous sociologists and psychologists. Doherty & Needle (1991) found that children from disrupted families generally do become involved in delinquent activity more often than those who come from stable family structures. However, Davies and McAlpine (1998) reported that single-parenthood *per se* is not a risk factor for children. Rather, it is the associated economic conditions with single motherhood that disadvantages these women and causes their children to be at-risk. Children who reside within stepfamilies experience more antisocial and internalizing behaviours than those in stable nuclear family units (Bray, 1988; Ganong & Coleman, 1993).

A number of researchers have recently found that the nature of the relationship between a parent(s) and a child is the key factor in relieving stress and anxiety, and ensuring that adolescents lead a stable and acceptable lifestyle. Some researchers have reported that parental monitoring was a strong deterrent to adolescent involvement in delinquent pursuits (Bogenschneider, Wu, Raffaelli, & Tsay, 1998; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Snyder, Dishion, & Patterson, 1986). Others stress the importance of a strong bond between parent and child in facilitating positive behavior, more so than simply having the parent(s) serving as monitors (Copper & Cooper, 1992; Youniss & Smaller, 1985).

Hirschi's (1969) social control theory posits that family problems may create an environment that is not positively grounded in traditional social institutions and that can lead to deviant behaviour. A strong sense of attachment to a parent is necessary to curb negative behaviours and promote positive values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Much of the research on sociocultural family influences has been rather general, and has not focused on specific aspects of family bonding that are important in curbing negative behaviors (Pabon, 1998). Rutter and Giller (1984) investigated certain family variables related to juvenile delinquency such as degree of parental supervision, marital conflict, and parent criminality. They speculated that the chain of adversities starts with socioeconomic disadvantage. They did not include variables related to leisure. Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson (1986) associated weak affectional relationships with delinquency, and were among the first researchers to identify shared leisure activities and an important factor in family bonding and delinquency prevention. A recently completed longitudinal study of male adolescents involved in delinquency examined various factors relating to family such as socialization, sanctioning, normlessness, and family solidarity (Pabon, 1998). The researchers concluded that time spent with family, on evenings and weekends was the only variable positively associated with lack of involvement in delinquent activity.

Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson (1986) and Pabon (1998) have identified that leisure is an important variable to consider when investigating specific aspects of family relationships for those who engage in delinquent behaviors. Clearly there is work to be done in understanding more about the nature of the family leisure for those who engage in delinquent activity.

A review of existing literature relating to family and delinquency highlights that little has been reported on the nature of, or motivations for, the delinquent behavior being engaged in by adolescents whose families are being studied. In particular, little has been reported in the literature specifically about the relationship between parents and their children who engage in delinquent activities as their leisure. A myriad of questions exist in terms of the family structure and background, the nature of the parent child relationship, the value those parents place on leisure, whether the parents serve as leisure role models and leisure educators for their children. Does the family background or relationships foster an environment that contributes to the adolescents choosing leisure pursuits that are not considered to be socially acceptable or desirable?

### *Leisure and Family Research*

Issues related to family and leisure have been addressed in a variety of ways in research literature. Most research has represented a parental perspective and has investigated how various factors have impacted the leisure of one or both parents (Harrington & Dawson, 1993; Horna, 1989; Shaw, 1992; Wearing, 1993). One of the few studies to consider the adolescent perspective was reported by Hood and Morris (1993). These researchers investigated the relationship between perception of family functioning, defined as cohesion and adaptability, and perception of leisure. They found the relationship between family cohesion and leisure to be a complimentary one,

while the relationship between perceived family adaptability and leisure was an inverse one.

Since 1990, a number of researchers have reviewed existing literature on leisure and family and made recommendations for future directions. Orthner and Mancini (1990) presented a theoretical paper addressing leisure impacts on family bonding. They concluded, after extensive literature review, that there is an urgent need to examine whether family leisure experiences contribute to family bonding. Kelly (1993) reviewed the existing literature on family leisure and suggested that it demonstrated only a vague awareness of the social changes that are affecting family leisure. Kelly discussed the need for a new direction in the family leisure research agenda that addresses current social changes. Such an agenda must go beyond measurable elements such as time and resources and address deeper questions such as what type of society is needed to realize the potential of leisure for all.

While the family has been discussed in the literature as a major socializing agent through which adolescents learn about leisure and develop their interests and attitudes (Virgilio, 1990), little empirical study of this relationship has taken place. The research reported here begins to address this lack by examining the perceptions of childhood family experiences and family leisure from the perspective of adolescents who have a history of engaging in delinquent activities as leisure.

### Recruitment of Participants Methodology

The criteria for participation in this study were that the individual be male, aged 18–21, and have been convicted as a juvenile of one or more offenses that were engaged as leisure. Further, participants could not be under direct supervision of the courts at the time that data were being collected.

To recruit participants, eleven agencies were contacted that worked with young men who fit the criteria for participation in this study. Agency staff were briefed and asked to contact potential participants to explain the study and to invite them, if interested, to contact the researcher. Once the participants were selected, they were contacted by phone or letter and an initial interview date was set at a time and place convenient to the individual.

Eight males between the ages of 18 and 21 years of age participated in this study. None of the participants were under the influence of the justice system during the period of data collection, although all had a history of having been in conflict with the law for involvement in delinquent activity. The nature of the delinquent activities that they engaged in as leisure included pranks, vandalism, theft, illegal entry, assault, and drive-by shooting.

Study participants reported that they came from a broad range of family backgrounds, representing both single-parent and two-parent families, professional and non-skilled working-parents, low to upper economic levels, and with home environments ranging from nurturing and loving to violent and

abusive. Two were the lone child in the family, while the others had one or more siblings. One participant was African American, one Native American, and the others were Caucasian.

Four participants grew up living in towns, one lived in mainly in rural areas while the others primarily resided in large urban areas. Half the participants had been labeled gifted students in school, and all but two described themselves as athletically talented. Some participants were high school drop-outs while others were enrolled in university degree programs.

### *Data Collection*

The data collection process consisted of four distinct phases: an initial in-depth face-to-face interview, completion of a self-administered workbook, participation in a one day retreat consisting of focus group discussions, and a final face-to-face interview. Initial interviews were conducted during a two-week period. During individual interviews, participants were asked to reflect upon questions about personal life experiences. The interview guide contained a series questions related to family, friends, school experiences, recreation activities and interests, leisure knowledge and attitudes, constraints, and involvement in delinquent activities. Questions specific to family included:

Tell me about your family.

Describe what leisure was like with your family.

What was the meaning of leisure to other members of your family?

What interests and hobbies did you have growing up?

Describe what your childhood was like.

What is the meaning of leisure to you?

What was the reaction of others to your involvement in delinquent activity?

Initial interviews ranged in length from 1 hour, 30 minutes to 2 hours, 30 minutes. All interviews were tape recorded. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were given a workbook and instructed as to its use. Participants were given approximately two weeks to complete the workbook. The workbooks were collected by the researcher and reviewed prior to the retreat

The retreat was held in a secluded setting where participants would feel comfortable. It consisted of three focus group sessions which lasted approximately 2 hours each. During these sessions, the researcher raised issues for general discussion that resulted from the initial interviews and workbooks. The purpose of these sessions was to seek clarification, elaboration, and discussion on key issues raised in the data collected to date. Focus group sessions were audio taped with the permission of all participants. The retreat setting provided an opportunity during breaks for informal dialogue with study participants, during which time the researcher sought clarification and elaboration on data collected in the focus group sessions with individual participants. All data resulting from the retreat were reviewed along with

data collected during the initial interview and from the workbook to structure the second interview.

Second interviews were scheduled with participants to verify interpretation of data collected previously, probe issues raised throughout the process, and bring closure to the data collection phase of the study. The second interview consisted of two parts: common questions which were asked of each participant and individual questions designed to collect further data about a particular individual. Common questions related to issues such as the nature of leisure shared with siblings, impact of events such as family break-up and moving on their leisure, aspects of their family leisure that they would like to have changed, and advice that they would like to convey to those responsible for the provision of leisure services. Interviews were held during the 10 days following the retreat and ranged in length from 40 minutes to 2 hours.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using techniques presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Henderson and Bialeschki (1995), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Patton (1990) for guidance. All data contained on audio tapes were transcribed verbatim. Preliminary data analysis actually occurred throughout the data collection process. Following each phase of data collection, data were reviewed and emerging topics were further investigated in subsequent data gathering procedures. This involved listening to interview and focus group tapes, reading workbooks, and reading through the researcher's notes that were taken during and immediately following the interviews and focus group sessions. During the second interview, the researcher solicited clarification and confirmation of previously gathered data. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to verify her interpretation of the meaning participants attached to certain reported aspects of their life experiences.

Using the constant comparison technique, 41 general themes emerged that were compared to each other and checked against the various data sources including transcripts from two interviews, workbooks, and the focus group data. The themes were delimited and refined producing integrated focused categories, one of which dealt with the family background and interactions. Relative to this category were data on perceptions of family stability, parental leisure, shared family leisure experiences, interactions with parent(s) and siblings, and reflections on childhood experiences. These results are the focus of this paper.

### *Findings*

The pathways to delinquency are complex and not readily understandable through investigation of any single factor. Although there is no evidence in these data to suggest that family background or experiences caused these



individuals to engage in delinquent experiences, certain factors related to family appear to have contributed to a climate that may have helped foster delinquency.

Participants varied greatly in terms of their family backgrounds and the nature of their family experiences, however there were two commonalities that they shared. First, satisfaction of specific needs, namely social connection, rush, and release of stress motivated their involvement in delinquent behavior. And second, these needs were not satisfied through involvement with their families. These youth did not feel a strong sense of attachment to their families for a variety of reasons. This was especially true once they reached around the age of 10, when they perceived that their parents no longer were interested in them or their activities. As such, consideration of their parents' opinions about their activities was a not a factor in their behavioral decision making beyond that age.

The following data represent aspects of participants' experience that appear to have either direct or indirect relevance to the lack of attachment to family that participants' reported, and helped to create the needs for social connection, rush, and release of stress that they attempted to satisfy through the delinquent activities which they considered to be leisure. Although the behavior of participants in terms of involvement in delinquent behavior was similar, their individual experiences with family differed considerably.

The section of family stability describes the nature and structure of the family; family leisure describes the nature of shared leisure experiences within the family; parental leisure values discusses participants' perceptions of how their parents value leisure; and the relationship with parents section describes how participants' viewed their relationship with each of their parents. These data help provide insights into the family circumstances that may foster an environment where decisions are made by adolescents to engage in delinquent activities for leisure rather than activities that are considered to be socially acceptable.

### *Family Stability*

Despite previous claims that the lack of stability of the family structure often correlates to youth involvement in delinquency, that was not always the case in this study. The presence of both biological parents living in the home itself was not a relevant factor in whether or not these youth engaged in delinquent activity as their leisure. The nature of the relationships within the family seemed to be a much more relevant factor.

These data are reported as they present, in part, a different picture of the family structure and circumstances of delinquent youth than is often reported, particularly in the popular press. Little literature exists that compares youth background based upon the nature of their delinquent activity. These data only report on youth that engaged in delinquent activity for ex-

pressed motives normally associated with leisure. Whether these youth differ from those who engage for other motives is beyond the scope of this particular study.

Four of the Caucasian participants came from what they described as relatively stable, home environments where they lived with two parents. Three of the participants grew up living under the same roof as their biological parents and they all had siblings living at home with them. They engaged in leisure activities as a family, and had what could be described as a normal, functioning family unit.

In Danny's case, his parents separated when he was eleven years old. Until that point, his life had been relatively stable and happy.

I was pretty spoiled. I just got everything I wanted. My parents always told me they loved me all the time. I had a really good childhood. My Dad didn't get involved too much with family things but my Mom and sister and I did a lot of things.

By 'things', Danny was referring to shared leisure experiences. After his parents split up, his mother remarried, and they moved across the country. For the rest of his teen years, Danny moved back and forth between his biological parents living for brief periods of time with each. He reported getting along better with his mother than his father, but that his stepfather had quite a temper. As a result, he sought refuge in whatever home environment provided the greatest comfort at a given point in time. In neither living environment was he involved in leisure activities with either of his parents. His interpretation was that both parents were focused on building new lives for themselves and as such had little time to devote to parenting him, particularly in terms of shared leisure.

Two participants who came from more modest economic means also experienced the separation of their parents. Jay witnessed the divorce of his biological parents when he was very young and the separation of his mother from his stepfather when he was twelve.

My mom and dad were divorced. When I was twelve years old, my Mom divorced my stepdad. From that time, that's when I really started getting into trouble. We moved up to Madras first and that was a nice change, but still the same thing, using [drugs] and stuff. And then we went up to Portland and it was okay. At nights when my Mom was working in the bar, I was alone or I was at home partying. I'd make sure I had everything put away by 2:00 in the morning when she came home.

Jay had no contact with either his father or stepfather after they separated from his mother. For much of his youth, his mother was working nights and doing housework during the day leaving no time to engage in leisure activities with him. In another case, Matt and his mother lived with his father until one evening when he was twelve and his father tried to beat him. Matt did not want his family to split up. He felt that although life wasn't perfect, having his father was better than no father at all. The following account

described what happened that evening. Since that night he has carried the guilt of the breakup on his shoulders.

One night, I went downtown and heard that I was going to be on the news. The news was coming on at eleven o'clock at night. Dad wouldn't let me stay up to watch the news, and he started chasing me and I ran to my room and hid underneath my bunk bed and he started coming in there trying to hit me. And that's the night they split up after seven years of marriage cause he was trying to hit me and my Mom was fed up with him. And we packed up our stuff and split. We went down to California to my grandmother's. Then we came back up here and lived in a few hotels until he moved out, got his own apartment and then we went back to the house . . . I blamed myself a lot for my father leaving. I should have went to bed when I was told.

Matt was to be on the news because he excelled in a school sport competition that day and was being treated as a hero in the school. His father was not interested in even hearing about Matt's success let alone having him stay up late in order to watch it on television. During the years when Matt and his mother were moving around so that Matt's father could not find them, there was very little leisure activity in which Matt and his mother engaged.

Two other participants in the study were youth of color. Billy, who is African American, was raised by his mother in the Los Angeles area. He grew up resentful of the white race and poverty. He joined the Bloods gang at a young age as that was the gang in his neighbourhood.

My Mom had me when she was nineteen. My father wanted to take me away from my mother, that's all I know. My uncle stopped it. And when I was also a baby, I was kidnapped. So my Dad wanted to keep me for himself. I never knew my father except his name. . . . I didn't really rebel against my Mom but I was just wondering like how could she never let me talk to him (father). How come she never let me write to him or even acknowledge him to me.

So Billy didn't remember ever meeting his father. His mother provided as stable a home life as possible for him given the nature of the environment in which they lived. She did spend time engaging in leisure activities with him as a young boy, but once he entered his teens and the gang, he was no longer interested in spending his free time with her. Sam's heritage is Native American, but says he has never identified with that aspect of his background. He grew up living with his biological parents but never felt as though they cared particularly about what happened to him and his siblings.

My dad is a showman in the Indian tradition. My mom, I think she basically follows whatever people tell her to do. My father tried to teach me about Indian traditions. I never listened. My parents were always going off to Indian conventions, stuff like that, and basically it was just us kids at home. My older brother, he hates black people. He likes to beat them up and stuff like that. He's like really big and fights really good so he likes to bully people around. I used to steal cars with my brother. He taught me stuff like that.

And so Sam's memories were of his parents being gone a great deal of the time when he was young. During those times, he was under the supervision of his brother who was not a positive role model.

In summary, there was no consistent pattern of family stability reported in these data. Although certain participants represented the unstable family condition often associated with youth involvement in delinquency, others did not. As such, youth who engaged in delinquent activity as their leisure did not consistently represent either stable or unstable family structures.

### *Family Leisure*

Participants generally engaged in very few shared family leisure experiences, although most expressed an interest in doing so. The leisure activities that were shared with family seemed to be satisfying experiences. By about age ten, those who had experienced positive shared experiences with family, perceived that their parents were no longer particularly interested in engaging in activities with them. Neither did they perceive that parents were interested in assisting them to find meaningful activities outside of the home and family. At that point (age 10), participants did not appear to possess the ability to access socially acceptable activities for themselves that satisfied their needs. Involvement in delinquent activity outside of the home, that generally began at about ages eight to ten, did reportedly satisfy their needs.

As with family background, shared family leisure experiences varied greatly for the participants when they were growing up. Only Tom indicated that his family frequently engaged in shared leisure experiences to any great extent while he was young.

We used to do things together as a family. We did camping trips and road journeys and gardening. We had a big garden and it was like a family weekend activity. And like basic gatherings at night or weekends.

Billy and his mother used to play together frequently. Although she seldom initiated such activities, Billy remembered that she responded quickly when he called upon her to participate. He highly valued such interaction, especially since he didn't have many friends because of where they lived. In retrospect, he feels that his mother played outside with him in order to watch him because they lived in areas where there was a lot of gang violence.

In most cases, when the participants were children, leisure-related experiences with family consisted of infrequent events such as an occasional camping or fishing trip, attending a sporting event, or playing sports in the yard with their father. There was little recall of shared family leisure experiences for any participants after about age 10, with the exception of traditional holiday celebrations.

We didn't do anything much as a family, nothing except for holidays. Christmas would be, you know, buying presents, Christmas dinner and the Christmas morning around the tree thing. And we would go out to my grandparents'

house and eat lunch there. And, like on Thanksgiving and stuff like that. It was pretty much the holidays. We'd just have a dinner, exchange thoughts and presents and then that would be it.

Jay's parents were both heavy drug users when he was a child. Consequently, the family did very little together. By the time he was twelve, he was involved in drugs himself and spent most of his free time at home unsupervised. It wasn't until he and his mother left his father and went to live with his grandparents that he had any real exposure to socially acceptable activities such as sports.

I never really had any interest in sports or hobbies until after we moved out of my Dad's. I was about 13 at the time. When we moved in with my grandparents, that is where I learned about sports. And I played sports, I played basketball, football, track and I was just an all-round athlete and was good in all of them. My grandpa's family is really sports inclined. You know, they really love to be involved with just about any function. My uncle was involved in basketball and track and then my other uncle is involved in soccer.

Regardless of their life circumstances, all but one of the participants expressed the desire to have shared more leisure activities with their families.

I would have liked for us to have spent more fun time together. My brother had his friends. I had my friends. My sister, she had her little friends from around the corner. All they'd do is get in enough trouble. I just wanted it to be more of a family-type community in the home . . . you know, just go out and do things together [Andy].

Matt grew up alone with his mother after his parents separated. Even though his father had been abusive to him, he and his father had occasionally shared outdoor experiences that were very important to him. Matt had few friends growing up as he and his mother moved frequently, and his mother didn't have time to spend with him. He has fond memories of the experiences they did share and said that he wished they had been more plentiful.

I would have liked to have done more things as a family. I would have liked to have gone fishing and camping a lot more, maybe go out to the movies which is something we never did. But we did go camping and fishing once in a while . . . I really would've liked to went camping a lot more.

Sam, the one study participant who gave no evidence of wishing he had experienced more family leisure, was unable to identify any positive shared family experiences from when he was growing up. Without benefit of having experienced family leisure, he expressed no desire for it.

A relatively consistent pattern in these data was that despite the family background, with one exception these adolescents did not engage in shared leisure experiences with their families beyond age 10. Many did not engage in such activities even at a younger age. These youth, with one exception, did express the desire to have shared more family leisure experiences grow-

ing up. As young adults, most of these participants reported feeling not particularly close to their parents growing up, and felt that had they shared more leisure experiences as adolescents, that they would possibly have developed stronger bonds with one or both parents.

### *Parental Leisure Values*

How do parents whose sons engage in delinquency as leisure value leisure themselves? Or more accurately in this study, how do the youth perceive that their parent(s) value leisure? According to participants' perspectives, parents differed greatly in the way in which they valued leisure. Those of higher socio-economic status were reported to have valued and incorporated leisure into their lives, more so than those of a lower economic means. Mark and Tom came from middle or upper class families. Mark said the following about his parents:

My parents definitely value their leisure. My father does a lot of athletics still such as lift weights and runs. My mother has a lot less leisure time. Most of her leisure time I guess is probably spent reading. My parents spent a lot of time just enjoying each other.

Tom described his parents as having active leisure lifestyles on the weekends during which time different family members engaged in a variety of activities. During the week, his parents were mainly involved in their professional work. His father spent time tinkering with old cars. Tom gained an interest in, and became skilled with, fixing cars through watching his father.

My Mom was into crafts. She used to make lots and lots of straw flowers. My Dad has always had a project car, something that he has always had apart. Like every weekend something new was happening, taken apart, looked at and fixed.

At the same time, others perceived their parents as not valuing leisure. Andy described his father as being very work-oriented. Andy reported that even when his father was not working he had a difficult time disassociating from his work.

My Dad can't accept not working. He'd have to do something that was work orientated in order to feel comfortable. He always works so hard that when he had leisure, he was still thinking about work and wanting to get back to work. He was thinking about what his next business transaction would be or whatever.

Although not to the same extent as his father, Andy felt that he has been strongly influenced by his father's intensity. However, Andy applied it to the pursuit of excellence in his sport endeavors more so than to his work. He became a nationally ranked athlete and in part contributed his high level of commitment to that of his father.

Jay's parents' activities centered around alcohol and drug consumption. His mother worked and spent her free time at the bar, which is where his father went after work, leaving Jay at home alone. Jay felt that they had little

interest in how he spent his time. He described his parents' favorite leisure activity as "camping out at the bar."

In cases where the parents were separated, the mothers seemed to have few leisure interests from their son's perspective. Participants couldn't identify what their mothers did besides work hard to provide for the family and to look after the house.

Parents generally were not aware of the activities in which their sons engaged. With the exception of Andy, whose father strongly encouraged participation in certain sports, study participants reported that their parents were not involved in the leisure aspects of their lives, especially after they turned 10. In Andy's case, he felt that his father pushed him to engage in sports that he would have liked to have competed in himself, not necessarily the ones in which Andy had an interest.

My father always wanted to be a decathlete and I think all the things he wanted to do but didn't, he wanted us to do. And then he started one day pushing the decathlon really hard on me but I started to accelerate in the javelin. And I sort of felt with decathlon it was something that I had to do where the javelin was something I wanted to do.

Another incident that Andy recalled related to when he was in the Boy Scouts. His father's negative attitude toward Boy Scouts eventually caused Andy to quit this activity.

I was in the Boy Scouts. My brother and Dad used to call them 'scrub scouts' and said that they were sort of a lot of wimpy kids in there and so I dropped out.

Sam's parents, who were Native American, were heavily involved in native cultural activities, which he considered to be their leisure. Sam was not included in these activities and as such grew resentful of his parents' involvement in them. He had little idea what these activities involved and so they did not become part of his own leisure activity repertoire.

Despite the degree to which certain parents seemed to value and incorporate leisure into their lifestyle and encourage play activities for them as children, by the time the participants became adolescents, there was little evidence of parental guidance or encouragement related to leisure. In certain cases, parents did not seem to value or pursue meaningful leisure experiences in their own lives. Their sons were uncertain as to whether this was by choice, circumstances, or that the parent(s) themselves had not been exposed to meaningful leisure activities. In a number of cases, participants appeared to have adopted certain of their leisure values (positive and negative) and interests from their parents, and in particular from their fathers.

### *Relationship with Parents*

Participants generally seemed to have had closer and more stable relationships with their mothers than their fathers but shared few leisure expe-

riences with them. Most greatly valued the leisure opportunities made available on occasion by their fathers. However, there is little evidence in these data to suggest that parents generally took an active role in positively influencing participants' leisure.

One participant never knew his father, and three experienced separation from their fathers when their parents broke up, which generally occurred just prior to them entering their teens. In these cases, participants all expressed feeling deprived of the opportunity to share experiences such as camping, fishing, and hunting with their fathers. In no case did they say that they had engaged in such activities with their mothers.

Mothers were considered to be the primary caregiver of these participants. In half the cases, the mother raised the participant primarily on her own. Generally, participants reported having had positive relationships with their mothers.

Billy was born in a gang-dominated area of South Central Los Angeles, and his mother did everything to keep him out of the gangs. At one point she moved to an all white area, where he developed a strong dislike and mistrust for white people. Eventually they moved away from California so that he might have a chance at a better quality of life than she perceived was possible for him in California growing up during the 1970's. This is how Billy described his mother:

My Mom was also my father. She was my woman, my wife, my girlfriend. She was my companion . . . my soul mate. She was everything, you see. I always paid attention to my Mom.

Most participants considered their mothers to be caring individuals. Although they appreciated their mothers, most did not feel that their mothers played a significant role regarding the development of their leisure values and interests. Jay felt very isolated as a child.

I didn't have anybody care about me. I mean Mom cared but she was just too high [drugs] to know it at times, you know.

Jay felt that he raised himself mainly because his parents weren't there for him. After his parents split up his mother tried to become involved in his life and decision making, but he resented her for having not been there for him earlier in life.

My Mom thought I was out of control. She didn't know why I was doing it. She just thought I was a little trouble maker. I wanted to do what I wanted to do not what my Mom wanted me to do. Maybe it's 'cause my Mom was never home since I was seven years old. I'd cook my own meals, and stay home alone at night by myself. That was getting independent and then when somebody tries to come down on you and tell you what to do, you say, "Why are you telling me what to do now when you were never around to tell me what to do?"

Two of the participants' mothers attempted to protect them from the actions of their fathers. In one case, this meant taking her son and leaving



her husband in order to protect him from abuse. Matt felt that even though his mother took him away to protect him, that living with his father served as an effective deterrent to getting involved in delinquent activity.

I think that if my Mom and Dad would've stayed together, that I wouldn't have gotten involved in crime. I would have been too freaked out that my Dad would kill me. He would have beat me so bad that I'd want to be dead.

Danny got along better with his mother than either his biological father or his stepfather. At times she would keep things about Danny from her husband in order to protect her son.

My Mom came down to the police station and I was really scared. That's the first time I'd ever been caught by authorities. She didn't react harshly but made a point that she wasn't going to tell my stepdad 'cause he'd flip. We communicate really well my Mom and I, a lot better then I do with my Dad.

One participant never knew his father. Three participants did not live with their fathers during their teens once their parents had separated. Of these, two had engaged in some meaningful leisure activities with their fathers that they were not able to carry on after the separation. Of those who lived with their fathers, 3 of the 4 engaged in meaningful leisure activities with their fathers. Two of those who lived with their fathers described their fathers' behavior as abusive.

For most participants, shared experiences with father involved the son becoming involved in father's work or leisure interests. For Tom, this involved hanging around while his father worked on cars, which was his hobby. Danny's father was a boxing promoter, and Danny used to enjoy hanging around the gyms and going to see the fights just to be with his father.

Boxing is my Dad's interest. Basically he used to be a boxer, now he's a boxing promoter. He promoted a few fights here in town. I went to all those. I fought a little bit when I was a little kid.

Mark has long had a fascination with map reading and geography. He did a lot of extra reading in the area while he was in school and by the fifth grade felt that he knew more about the subject than any of the teachers who instructed him on the topic in school. In retrospect, he feels that his interest in geography grew out of his desire to spend time with his father when he was younger.

My hobby was studying geography. I loved studying maps. It could have been that I wanted, that was one time I could spend with my father. 'Cause you see my father got to do geography in the State of Washington. So it could have been kind of a subconscious way of spending time with my father because we'd go over geography all the time.

Jay's father played in a band when Jay was young. One of his favorite things to do was to hang around while the band practiced. He was an active child and enjoyed helping his father in any way possible just so that his father would want to have him around.

My Dad was a musician who played in a band. I got to help out in it sometimes, playing the bongos or something. He played around home, practices every Saturday and Friday and I was always there for that and I would go to the concerts and I'd always try to help out in the concerts. We'd make like little flyers or something. One year we made flags of each different country and passed it out to the people who came.

There was little evidence in the data to suggest that the fathers took much interest in the recreation activities of their sons. However, participants generally valued time spent with their fathers. Andy reported his father to be violent and aggressive but loving and sensitive at the same time.

He was always the justice. He was always calm and collected unless somebody messed with him and he'd pulverize them. I mean absolutely pulverize them. And after he pulverized 'em he'd lecture them. You know, "You shouldn't do that!" When he'd get mad at us or something, he'd hurt us, not hurt us bad but get real mad at us. But he'd feel bad but he really loved us a lot. He gave us a lot of attention, so it all worked out. I think that is where I kind of got it.

Matt and his mother left his father because of abusive treatment of Matt. Regardless of this behavior, Matt regrets having not had the opportunity to spend more time with his father, particularly engaging in outdoor activities together.

Ever since I was a kid, the only thing I can think of that I really wanted was maybe a father, that my Mom would have stayed with somebody. But now that she's divorced, she's happy. I guess that's all right 'cause that's her life . . . but it would have been worth staying if my dad would have showed me more outdoor life.

Danny has fond memories associated with outdoor experiences shared with his father. Even though he often did not get along well with his father, they seemed to communicate well and enjoy one another when they were off fishing together.

I would have liked to have been taught to go hunting. My Dad, he's been hunting and everything but, that was before I met him. We used to get up at three o'clock in the morning and already have a boat hooked up to the camper and truck and me and my Dad would take off up into the high lakes and go fishing for like two days. And that would be real fun.

Both Matt and Danny fondly remember the outdoor experiences shared with their fathers and regret not having had more opportunity to engage in such activities while growing up. Unlike those participants who specifically expressed the desire to spend time with their father, the experience seemed to be what was important to Matt and Danny and their fathers were the only known ways to participate in such experiences.

### Discussion

Although participants' backgrounds were somewhat diverse in terms of socio-economic status, family structure, and race, there are a number of re-

lated issues raised through these data that warrant further consideration and research. For the most part, participants seemed to value leisure experiences shared with family. Despite the fact that most had brothers and/or sisters, siblings were generally not perceived as leisure companions or having any role to play relative to the leisure of participants in this study.

Although most participants felt close to their mothers, they looked to their fathers for shared leisure experiences, mostly ones centered around outdoor pursuits and sport. Participants highly valued such experiences, but there was little evidence in these data to indicate that fathers committed much time to sharing leisure activities with their sons. Frequently, shared leisure experiences involved the son attempting to participate in a hobby of the father. Participants did not perceive that their fathers took much interest in their sons chosen leisure pursuits. This finding was consistent with the work of Robinson (1978), who found that delinquent males described their fathers as being detached, and that they perceived that their parents were not interested in their activities.

Since participants generally looked to their fathers, rather than their mothers, with an expectation and desire for shared leisure experiences, fathers were naturally better positioned to serve as leisure educators and role models for their sons. Fathers did not seem to fulfill that role, however, according to their sons. On the other hand, sons respected their mothers and report that they would have been open to sharing leisure activities with their mothers. As such, in most cases, it appears as though either parent could have facilitated meaningful leisure experiences for their sons, and influenced their sons leisure choices, had they the interest and knowledge to do so.

The increasing rate of family separation, with 28% of Canadian and 44% of American marriages ending in divorce, is a cause for concern for many reasons (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994). Highlighted by the current study was the fact that sons whose parents had divorced had little or no contact with their fathers during their teen years. This meant that they lost access to whatever leisure activities they had shared with their fathers and knew of no other way to participate in such activities. Although such activities were infrequent, they were very meaningful to participants in the study.

Divorce affected the leisure of these adolescents in two other ways. Single mothers in the study generally worked evening hours, leaving their sons at home alone. This caused the boys to feel alienated and lonely, and provided unrestricted access to negative behaviors such as drinking and taking drugs. Participants perceived that their mothers were so involved in trying to support the family that they had no time left for their own leisure or to facilitate leisure activities for their sons. These data also indicated that single mothers moved frequently, making it difficult for their sons to maintain relationships or sustain involvement in structured leisure activities.

Results of the current research are consistent with previous research which indicates that the effects of divorce on children are varied and include negative economic consequences, limited contact with the non-resident par-

ent, less availability of the residential parent, and increased frequency in changes in residence (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994). Little research has been conducted to address the effects of changing family patterns in relation to the leisure of children. As Kelly (1993) suggested, family leisure research is not keeping pace with current social changes.

This study indicated that parents did not serve as effective leisure educators for their sons. In some cases, adolescents lacked breadth in their repertoire of leisure interests and experiences; in other cases they seemed to lack the skills to be able to facilitate their own activities or were unable to negotiate the constraints encountered in pursuing existing leisure opportunities. This did not prevent them, however, from being able to facilitate delinquent experiences which seemingly had fewer constraints to negotiate.

Mirabelli (1990) indicated that men and women are both working longer hours inside and outside of the home out of economic necessity, in order to maintain their families. Individuals value family enough to work harder, but the result is limited time and energy for family interaction. Given the current economic climate, it is unlikely that parents will be willing or able to accept new responsibilities which are not regarded as essential for survival. Yet a sense of attachment to societal institutions such as family, schools, churches, and communities serves as a deterrent to negative behaviors. A sense of connection is established through feedback which confirms a person's belonging and acceptance within a particular institution (Hawkins & Weis, 1985). Study participants did not perceive that their parents had a genuine interest or involvement in the activities that were important to them. Therefore, if parents are to assume responsibility for facilitating leisure experiences and serving as leisure educators for their children, they need to learn to value these roles and recognize them as essential to their children's well-being.

Many current social conditions experienced in everyday living, such as unemployment, personal financial crisis, decreasing access to health care, and rising divorce rates, can erode the amount and quality of time spent with families (Armstrong & Johnson, 1991). Daily pressures leave many adults too psychologically exhausted to devote time and energy to other family members. Coupled with this trend, recent research reported that much of the attention that parents once focused on their children is now shared with caretaking responsibilities for their own aging parents. In fact, a greater percentage of an adult's life is spent in caring for parents than for his or her children (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1990). Taken together, these trends indicate that many adults do not have sufficient time to properly address the leisure needs of their children or their own personal leisure needs. Thus, it appears likely that many youth may be at-risk of feeling a lack of attachment to societal institutions such as families, schools, and communities that are able to make them feel accepted and respected.

In conclusion, the author has explored aspects related to family background, family relationships, family dynamics, and social and economic environment of individuals who engage in delinquent activity as leisure. Con-

sistent with Davies & McAlpine (1998) and Magnus, Cowen, Wyman, Fagen, and Works (1999) family background per se seemed to have little bearing on whether adolescents engaged in delinquent activity. It did appear, however, that there were factors relating to the nature of relationships with parents that were consistent for these participants.

These participants did not have strong relationships with their parents which previous researchers have reported to be an important variable in adolescents selection of positive pursuits rather than delinquent ones (Cooper & Cooper, 1992; Youniss & Smaller, 1985). Beyond age 10, there was little evidence of shared leisure experiences for parent(s) and son. Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson (1986) and Pabon, (1998) have reported that shared family leisure experiences can serve as a positive deterrent to delinquent behavior. Participants perceived parents as not being interested in sharing leisure time with them or in helping to facilitate satisfaction of their leisure needs, either inside the home or out. Generally, the youth did not feel respected by their parents and did not feel a strong sense of attachment to their families. Thus parental opinion was not a deterrent to involvement in delinquent activity.

These data do not suggest that delinquency was a direct product of the nature of family relationships. These data do suggest, however, that family may have an important role to play in helping prevent youth from choosing delinquent activities, rather than socially acceptable ones, as leisure. The nature of this relationship requires further research. It appears as though many of the factors that have challenged the young people in this study represent trends that are becoming more wide spread in North America, potentially putting many youth at-risk.

### *Implications*

The findings of this research have implications to be considered by researchers and recreation service providers. Further research is required in order to better understand the role of parent as leisure educator and facilitator, from the perspective of both adult and child. This study focused on male adolescents with a history of involvement in delinquent activity for fun and further research is required in order to understand the perspectives of females who engage in similar activity and the factors which motivate them to do so. Another area identified through this study as a focus for additional research is the impact that family changes such as separation or relocation have on the leisure patterns of children. The methodological challenge for researchers is to develop ways of collecting data that facilitate deeper reflection on the lives of those without power and privilege.

Providers of recreation services should be aware that for a myriad of reasons, all parents do not serve as effective leisure educators and facilitators for their children. As such, service providers must consider facilitating leisure education processes for youth, as well as assisting parents in fulfilling the leisure component of the parental role. A further role for service providers

exists in the provision of accessible recreation opportunities for youth from families of varying structures.

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