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# Family and Marital Satisfaction and the Use of Social Network Technologies

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FAMILY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AND THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORK  
TECHNOLOGIES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Recreation, Sport and Tourism  
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## ABSTRACT

The popularity of social network sites (SNS) is increasing among all age groups. Since shared leisure is considered to be one of the key factors that contribute to the stability and quality of marriage and family and life satisfaction, the interplay between the use of SNS by family members, their leisure and their marital and family satisfaction should be examined. The objectives of this study were to: (1) Explore how the use of SNSs by family members influences and is influenced by family leisure and family satisfaction; (2) Examine how the use of SNSs by couples influences and is influenced by marital leisure and marital satisfaction; and (3) Examine what rules families have regarding the use of SNSs and how those rules influence their family and marital satisfaction. In this study, 7 families, including 21 individual family members, participated in family and individual interviews. The data showed that participants perceived the use of SNSs to influence their satisfaction with family leisure and their family satisfaction in a variety of ways. Among the negative influences were concerns related to communication in the family, insufficient time spent with family, and lack of attention during interactions. The participants also reported positive influences of SNSs, including an opportunity to update relatives and friends on their family life and development of a sense of belonging. Family relationships also influenced the use of SNS and either led to an increase or decrease in their use as a result of conflicts and tensions. The majority of the families only had unspoken rules related to limited screen time and appropriateness of information shared via SNSs. As a result of the study, the *Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Family Satisfaction* was developed. Suggestions for both practitioners and future researchers were provided.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Goals and Objectives of the Study.....	8
1.3. Definitions .....	9
1.4. Scope of the Study .....	12
1.5. My Story .....	14
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1. Introduction.....	18
2.2. Family Leisure .....	18
2.3. Marital Satisfaction and Satisfaction with Family Life .....	38
2.4. Information and Communication Technology (ICT).....	55
<b>CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>87</b>
3.1. The Symbolic Interaction Family Theory.....	87
3.2. Sociotechnological Model .....	90
<b>CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>96</b>
4.1. Introduction.....	96
4.2. Role of the Researcher .....	97
4.3. Ontological, Epistemological, Theoretical, and Methodological Foundations.....	98
4.4. Data Collection .....	107
4.5. Data Analysis .....	126
4.6. Trustworthiness.....	128
<b>CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>132</b>
5.1. Introduction.....	132
5.2. The Influences of the Use of Social Network Sites by Parents and Children (as a Leisure Activity) on Family Members' Satisfaction with Leisure as a Family and their Family Satisfaction .....	136
5.3. The Influences of Family Satisfaction and Satisfaction with Family Leisure on the Use of Social Network Sites by Family Members .....	155
5.4. The Relationships among Spousal Use of Social Network Sites (as a Leisure Activity), Spouses' Satisfaction with Leisure as a Couple, and their Marital Satisfaction .....	157
5.5. The Rules Regarding the Use of Social Network Sites by Family Members and the Influences of Those Rules on Family and Marital Satisfaction .....	165
5.6. Summary .....	171

<b>CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>173</b>
6.1. The Interaction between the Use of Social Network Sites and the Quantity and Quality of Family Leisure, Satisfaction with Family Leisure, and Family Satisfaction.....	173
6.2. The Relationships between Spousal Use of Social Network Sites (as a Leisure Activity) and Quantity and Quality of Spousal Leisure, Spouses' Satisfaction with Leisure as a Couple, and Marital Satisfaction .....	185
6.3. The Existence of Rules about the Use of SNSs in Families and the Influence of these Rules on the Relationships between Family Members.....	186
6.4. Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Family Satisfaction and the Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Marital Satisfaction .....	188
<b>CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>196</b>
7.1. Contributions of the Study .....	196
7.2. Limitations of the Study.....	197
7.3. Suggestions for Future Research .....	200
7.4. Suggestions for Practitioners .....	201
7.5. Concluding Thoughts.....	203
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>205</b>
Appendix A: Advertisement for e-week and Facebook.....	227
Appendix B: Initial Screening Form .....	228
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for Parental and Child's Participation.....	229
Appendix D: Minor Informed Assent Form .....	232
Appendix E: Family Interview Script .....	234
Appendix F: Individual Interview Script (adults) .....	236
Appendix G: Individual Interview Script (children) .....	240

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

From its revolutionary beginnings, information and communication technology (ICT) that was designed to increase efficiency and productivity in every sphere of life was also expected to increase people's leisure opportunities (Albrechtsen, 2001). While an extreme increase in leisure time has never materialized, the extended research (Horst, 2010; Lasen, 2005; Levinson, 2004; Mesch, 2006a; Mesch, 2006b; Turkle, 2011; Watkins, 2009) and casual evidence suggest that the use of technology has changed our lives: our work, education, leisure time, our perception of ourselves, our families and communities. People play an active role in these changes. Their individual personalities, emotions and beliefs, as well as their demographic characteristics influence what kinds and how technologies are used in everyday life. These technological changes brought with them many anticipated benefits (e.g., connecting people separated by distances), as well as some unexpected challenges (e.g., overuse of the Internet, loss of ability to distinguish real and virtual worlds).

It is hard to overestimate the importance of technology in modern life. The overwhelming majority of Americans own and use modern technological devices on a daily basis. For example, 85% of Americans own a cell phone, 76% own either a desktop or a laptop computer (Smith, 2010), and 77% have access to the Internet (Federal Communications Commission Report, 2008). Used for work, leisure, shopping, entertainment, or communication, technology has a significant effect on the lives of both users and non-users. Considering that leisure time has also

been influenced by modern technological developments, this topic should be explored in more detail in leisure research.

Technology is a very broad concept that would be impossible to cover in one research project. Thus, this study will focus on one type of technology that has greatly influenced communication and relationships between people in the last several years – social network sites (SNSs). Created online, these services offer their users the opportunity to build a personal profile, connect and share content with other users. Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter are among the most often mentioned SNSs. The overwhelming adoption of SNSs around the world can be exemplified by the rapidly increasing popularity of Facebook. As of 2011, there were more than 700 million active Facebook users, 50% of whom log on to their Facebook accounts on a daily basis and spend there almost 12 billion hours per month (Facebook website statistic, 2011). The number of people who use Twitter, which allows its users to post 140 character answers to the question “what’s happening?”, has reached 180 million in 2010 (Yarov, 2010, April 14). On the other hand; however, the number of MySpace’s users has begun to decrease and in the beginning of 2011 has reached around 63 million visitors (Arrington, 2011, March 23).

Launched less than a decade ago (MySpace was launched in 2003, Facebook in 2004, and Twitter in 2006), social network sites became popular among people of all ages, racial/ethnic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and socio-economic statuses. Due to their rapid development, neither creators of SNSs nor their users were ready to face the potential dangers and issues brought by their invention. They included cyberbullying (Watkins, 2009), sexual exploitation of children (Barton et al., 2007), issues related to privacy and identity theft (Gross &

Acquisti, 2005; Stutzman, 2006), compulsive use (Watkins), loss of connection with reality (Diehl, 2008), attachment to online relationships, and cyberaffairs and infidelity (Turkle, 2011).

In the majority of cases, negative effects are not limited to individual users, but are likely to influence their entire families. For example, Mesch (2006a) found that the more frequently adolescents used the Internet the less time they spent with their families. Moreover, if the Internet was used by teenagers for social purposes and not for education, the level of inter-generational conflict in the family was higher. Another issue related to the use of the Internet is the difference in “Internet literacy” between parents and children. According to Watkins (2009), “School-age children embraced the technology like no other segment in America” (p. 6). Teenagers, in his opinion, are “the family gateway to the Web” (p. 7). Due to differences in technology literacy, power dynamics in modern families are likely to be reversed, giving youth more autonomy and control over their relationships with people outside of family circle.

The issues related to technology adoption by family members are very complex and are not limited to its excessive use by children. While traditionally teenagers have been described as the first adopters of technology (Watkins, 2009) and were blamed for over-using it, Turkle (2011) provided opposing examples of children competing with technology for their parents’ attention. The author described experiences of children whose parents spent time on their cell phones while attending children’s sporting events. She also showed how teenagers desired to introduce a ban on cell phones at the dinner table so that parents could leave their work behind and focus on the family.

Not only parents’ relationships with children but also their relationships with each other



are likely to be influenced by the use of technology. Spouses' Internet use may reduce the amount of time spent on other leisure pursuits with their families or with each other, increase opportunity to reconnect with long-lost friends and romantic partners, create an escape environment for those experiencing marital problems and even lead to virtual infidelity (Turkle, 2011; Young, 1999). On the other hand, technology may have a positive effect on parent-child relationships, as well as on relationships between spouses. For example, some couples reported that their relationships became more flirtatious and exciting because of text messaging (Taylor & Vincent; 2005), while some parents said that technology (specifically computer games and the Internet) was the only uniting experience helping them to have something in common with their children (Horst, 2010). The Internet also allows extended and transnational families to stay in touch, to share pictures and to have online conversations with the use of web-cameras (Horst). Since the knowledge of how social network sites may positively and negatively influence relationships between different members of modern families is rather scarce, more research focused on these issues is needed.

It is especially important to study the use of technology in modern families since technologies are important components of many modern leisure experiences and can have a significant effect on the quality of family leisure time. Family leisure, on the other hand, is a valuable factor influencing family functioning, satisfaction, and communication (Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006; Kelly, 1997; Shaw, 1997; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). It is especially important in families with children since it provides important learning opportunities where parents may pass on traditions, teach youth about social and moral norms, as well as create

memorable moments as a family (Shaw & Dawson; Trussell & Shaw, 2007; Trussell & Shaw, 2009). However, research on how modern technological advances influence family leisure is very scarce. The majority of the existing research focuses on the effects of technology on individuals (Koivusilta, Lintonen, & Rimpela, 2007; Lee, Mezaros, & Colvin, 2009; Leng Eow, Zahbte Wan Ali, Mahmud, & Baki, 2009; Ling, 2007; Olson, 2010), their relationships with peer groups and community, and on people's individual characteristics that influence their adoption and use of technology (Kelan, 2007; Koivusilta et al.; Orleans & Laney, 2000). Moreover, such research often comes in the form of reports produced by large research centers such as The Pew Research Center, The UCLA Center for Communication Policy, or The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania (Cole et al., 2001; Jansen, 2010; Pierce, 2010), rather than peer reviewed articles. Few studies have been done on how family leisure influences and is influenced by technology, and by SNSs in particular. Research that would focus on the benefits families could obtain from technology use is also scarce. As Lanigan (2009) pointed out, "There is a tremendous need for studies that examine the effects of technologies on family functioning, processes, communication, roles, and relationships" (p. 595).

Many researchers have called for more studies focusing on the interplay between technological advancements and family functioning (Aponte, 2009) and on the face-to-face versus technological means of communication (Blinn-Pike, 2009). Others have argued that research needs to further investigate the positive effects of Internet use as a joint family activity, and the use of technology in different stages of family development (Bryce & Rutter, 2003; Mesch, 2006a). Bryce and Rutter also emphasized the need for more research on the positive

effects of playing computer games among boys and girls as one of the outlets for resistance to gender stereotypes. Due to advantages that computer skills may provide, including higher salaries and better professional opportunities, Sainz, Castano, and Artal (2008) expressed the need for more research on “digital literacy” and “digital fluency” divides between men and women. Similarly, studies on the digital gaps between members of different social classes and people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds are needed.

This project constitutes an important addition to the literature; not only due to its timeliness and novelty of the topic in our field, but also because of the methodological approach used in this study. There are still few studies that examine family leisure through the eyes of adolescents (Christenson, Zabriskie, Eggett, & Freeman, 2006; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003) and, as was suggested by Zabriskie and McCormick, studies using qualitative methods could shed light on the role and meaning of family leisure for adolescents. Since family is more than a sum of its components, there is a need for more information on how each member of the family experiences family leisure. Zabriskie and McCormick argued that from the perspective of the family system, “not only family dynamics influence each individual member of the family but also each member has an effect on the family as a system” (p. 166). Thus, the viewpoints and experiences of each family member are valuable and should be taken into consideration (Christenson, et al.). Moreover, projecting findings obtained from parents onto their children is not appropriate due to differences in developmental stages, motivations and abilities between different members of the family (Caldwell, Darling, Payne, & Dowdy, 1999; Larson, Gillman, & Richards, 1997). This study examined experiences of each participant, taking into consideration

differences (when they existed) in the use of and attitudes toward technology due to different age, gender, and proficiency levels.

This study did not only apply qualitative methods to investigate interplay between the use of technology and marital and family satisfaction, but also was designed and conducted with the main goal of development of a theory that would be appropriate and relevant to the participants themselves, both children and parents. My research project was sensitized by two theories – symbolic interaction family theory (White & Klein, 2008) and the Sociotechnological Model (Lanigan, 2009), as well as the concept of purposive leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). I believe this combination of theories, models and concepts provided a sound basis for the exploration of the relationships between family leisure and technology. For example, the Sociotechnological Model explains interactions between technology and family on different levels. It models the bi-directional influence of different characteristics of individual family members, stages in family life and surrounding family environment on the use of technology, as well as the effect of different characteristics of technology on its use by family members. Employing this model allowed me to consider the importance of different characteristics of individual family members, including their place in the family and the stage of family development.

Symbolic interaction family theory, which was also used in this study, focuses on the processes of meaning construction between family members. This approach was useful in a study about such a relatively new topic as SNSs since it helped to uncover meanings technology had for different family members, as well as for different families. Moreover, it helped to explain the differences in the importance of technology and leisure in the life of each family.

The concept of purposive leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 2001) is also important to consider while conducting research on families. As was discussed by Shaw and Dawson, while leisure with children may be an enjoyable experience, it is often associated with work-like responsibilities and serves specific goals, including the child's development, creation of memories and others. Similarly, in this research, family and couple leisure could be intentionally used to improve family and marital satisfaction. Thus, simultaneous use of symbolic interaction family theory, the Sociotechnological Model, and the concept of purposive leisure were combined to provide a solid base for the development of a theoretical framework that begins to explain the use of SNSs technologies by family members and their effect on satisfaction with marriage and family.

## **1.2. Goals and Objectives of the Study**

The goals of this study were to explore the relationships between family and marital relationships and the use of technology for leisure and to improve family and marital relationships in the contemporary technological world. The three objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore how the use of SNSs (as a leisure activity) by family members influences and is influenced by family leisure and family satisfaction;
2. Examine how the use of SNSs (as a leisure activity) by couples influences and is influenced by marital leisure and marital satisfaction;
3. Examine what rules (if any) families have regarding the use of SNSs and how those rules influence their family and marital satisfaction.

Besides direct relationships between the use of SNSs and family and marital satisfaction, satisfaction with leisure (spousal or family) was considered as a mediator between the use of SNSs for leisure purposes and satisfaction with family/marriage.

The study investigated the issue from the point of view of different family members and attempted to represent complexities of their relationships and experiences as individuals and as a unit. Such an approach was helpful in development of a holistic picture of the family–technology interaction and provided beneficial additions to the literature. Moreover, I believed that better understandings of the benefits and challenges related to the use of technology in family leisure may help families, family and marital therapists, as well as leisure service providers develop healthy leisure options for families.

### **1.3. Definitions**

Many concepts used in this project are multidimensional and complex and were defined differently by different researchers. Thus, it is important to clarify the definitions of the main concepts that were used in this study. I specifically focused on family, marital satisfaction, family satisfaction, family leisure, and social network sites. Each of these concepts will be discussed in more detail in the corresponding sections of the Literature Review.

The definition of *family* generated a significant debate due to its diverse structure and characteristics (Kerig, 2001). For the purpose of this study, I used the definition provided by the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (2001) who defined family as “two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and

have commitment to one another over time” (p. 3). By using this definition I was hoping to be able to ensure inclusion of much greater variety in the types of families (e.g., same sex couples, unmarried couples) than would be possible by employing a more traditional definition of family.

*Marital satisfaction* was defined by Gelles (1995) as “an individual’s subjective evaluation of the overall nature of marriage” (p. 232) that reflects the degree to which an individual’s expectations towards marriage are exhibited in his/her own marriage (Bahr, 1989; Gelles). The use of this definition allowed my participants to choose their own set of criteria that define what makes a marriage happy for them, without me attempting to standardize all the variety of relationships between spouses/partners. The results of previous research on what factors spouses find important for their marital satisfaction will be discussed further in the Literature Review.

Similarly to marital satisfaction, Bowen (1988a) allowed families to define and assess their *family satisfaction* based on their own set of criteria. While considering families' own criteria, I used the definition of family satisfaction offered by Olson (2006). According to Olson, family satisfaction is “the degree to which family members feel happy and fulfilled with each other” (p. 1). Moreover, according to Symbolic Interaction Theory (White & Klein, 2008), successful performance of a role in a relationship increases a person’s satisfaction with this relationship (“we like what we are good at”). Thus, marital and family satisfaction are not only influenced by one's expectations toward his/her spouse/child/parent and their marriage/family but also their expectations toward their own performance of the role of a wife/ husband/ parent/ child.

*Family and couple leisure* were traditionally defined as intrinsically motivated and freely chosen activities (Russell, 2009) engaged in with family members – parent/child and spouse, respectively (Shaw, 1997). However, in this study the concept of purposive leisure was also employed. *Purposive leisure* was defined by Shaw and Dawson (2001) as “planned, facilitated, and executed by parents in order to achieve particular short- and long-term goals” (p. 228). Based on a review of literature, I do not believe the concept of purposive leisure has ever been used before in the context of couples’ leisure. However, I kept goal-oriented types of leisure in mind while exploring the leisure of couples since there is evidence to suggest that leisure can be used as a mean to achieve certain relational goals (e.g., improved communication, shared interests, better problem-solving skills, as well as satisfaction with the marriage in general) (Smith, Freeman, & Zabriskie, 2009; Zabriskie and McCormick, 2001).

The definition of *technology* is very broad and refers to any object made by humans (Murphie & Potts, 2003). However, for the purpose of this project I focused on ICTs only and specifically on the SNSs technology use by family members. While *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* was defined in many different ways, as will be discussed in the Literature Review, for the purpose of this study I used the definition provided by the United Nations (2003). According to this definition, ICTs are “technologies people use to share, distribute, gather information and to communicate, through computers and computer networks” (United Nations, p. 3). This definition helps to identify the kinds of devices that will be discussed (“computers and computer networks”) but also explains how these devices are used (“to share, distribute, gather information and to communicate”).



This study also explored a specific type of technology – social network sites. *Social network sites (SNSs)* were defined by Boyd and Ellison (2008) as,

web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (p. 211).

While there are many other concepts that will be discussed in this project, this section provides clarification of the most important and frequently used ones.

#### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

In order to ensure that a manageable amount of data is collected in this project and that logical connections between categories can be developed from the data, the scope of the study should be identified. I will further delimitate the types of the families that were invited to participate in the project, as well as identify the types of information and communication technologies that were covered during the data collection stage.

*Family* is a multidimensional and complex concept that is represented by units with differing numbers, ages and genders of family members. Families may include people who belong to different cultures, social classes, sexual orientations, and levels of ability. Different types of families were welcome to participate in the project, including families with differing numbers, ages, and genders of children and their parents (biological or adoptive, married or cohabiting, same-sex and heterosexual, families with children from previous marriage). Families from different cultures were also welcome to participate in the study. Only one type of family

was excluded from the study due to specificity of the research question (focus on marital satisfaction) -- single-parent families. Some individual family members were also excluded from participation in the study. For example, children who were younger than 13 years of age were not included in the study since, according to the policies of the two main SNSs that will be investigated in this project (Facebook and MySpace), children who are younger than 13 are not officially allowed to create a profile. Children who were older than 17 years of age were not considered for participation since they represent a different age group – young adults. Children who do not permanently reside with their parents were also excluded from the study since their irregular interaction and leisure participation with their parents could bring different dimensions to the relationships that would not be salient for families who reside in one household. Lastly, in order to keep the data more manageable, the members of extended family, such as uncles, grandparents and others were also excluded from participation. At the time of the study the families resided in a mid-size town in the Midwestern United States with a large population of college faculty, staff and students.

Both *family/couple* and *individual leisure* were examined in this study. Since the use of SNSs is mostly an individual type of leisure, its effect on satisfaction/dissatisfaction with family/spousal leisure and thus, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with marriage/family were explored. Moreover, while the term *marital satisfaction* assumes married status of the spouses, this study considered cohabiting partners as well. Thus, the term “marital satisfaction” was used to define relational satisfaction of two partners (of any gender or marital status).

Among different types of ICTs, in this project I explored only technology used by family

members to access their SNSs profiles. One of the most often used for this purpose devices is computer or laptop with access to Internet. However, considering the progress in the development of cell phone technologies and the potential of modern cell phones to perform the majority of tasks originally only available through computers (connecting to the Internet, creating, sharing, distributing, and gathering of information), cell phones were also considered as an ICT device.

This study focused on one specific activity performed with the help of the discussed ICTs – the use of *social network sites (SNSs)* by different family members. Facebook, Twitter and MySpace, as the three most popular SNSs, were the main focus of this research. However, other SNSs used for leisure by the participants in addition to Facebook, Twitter and MySpace (mainly Google+) were also included. Since LinkedIn is a social network site used mostly for professional networking, its use by family members was not explored in this study.

## **1.5. My Story**

My own views on the topic of my research were shaped over the years of my development as an individual and a researcher. I was always a part of a family. Whatever I did, wherever I traveled I always knew there was a place I called home and this place was not a geographic location. Rather, it was a group of people I called family. I was lucky because my family was supportive, understanding and cheerful. It included both my biological very close nuclear family and the people I cared about who were not related to me by blood. The concept of

family was always confusing to me since I often felt much closer to many of my friends who could be of completely different backgrounds and who lived in various countries around the world than to many of the members of my extended family who lived on the next street but whose values and beliefs were foreign to me. With this thought in mind, in collaboration with my Korean friend, I conducted my first research project focused on issues of intercultural families. While working on this project I obtained a lot of theoretical knowledge from the field of family studies and gained many practical insights from the couples who participated in my study. I was also amazed about the complexity of issues that surround family life. I am yet to learn about many more dimensions of family life and leisure that simply cannot be explained by a single theory. I hope that the research I plan to conduct in the future will help to solve some of the mysteries surrounding the concept of family.

While each family is a universe of its own we cannot analyze it in separation from the context of the environment it is situated in. The contemporary world represents a very unique environment marked by profound technological and social changes. We live on the border of two worlds: one is slow moving and community oriented, based on personal interactions and outdoor activities. The other one is fast-paced, increasingly individualistic, and based on technology, information, and globalization. It becomes rather difficult not to notice these changes. Moreover, it is almost impossible to ignore them when observing interactions among people of different generations. Combining emotional attachments and socially constructed ties, family is a vivid representation of an entity where such interactions take place. It is very intriguing to me to explore how recent technological changes influence interactions among family members and

satisfaction they derive from family life.

While my experiences with technology are not as extensive as those of many people in the modern world, I find the topic of interaction between family and technology innovative, important and interesting. I was never a fast adopter of ICTs: I first started using a computer when it became obvious that hand-written theses will not be accepted by my Department, and I bought my first cell phone when I realized I was the only one among my friends who was impossible to get hold of. Resentment was never a part of my relationships with technology, but the thrill was not there either. I am much more a social person – living or preferring to live in a community rather than alone and always enjoying face-to-face interactions.

Several years ago I found myself to be “disconnected” from my friends due to lack of any SNS profile. I was strongly encouraged by a couple of friends to create my own Facebook account. I started to feel that I am a part of a group, a community that shares something similar – the desire “to stay in touch” with people who I genuinely care about. This group of often unrelated and dissimilar individuals who would be very hard to get together (due to geographic and language distance) share their photo-stories, express their frustrations and excitements, ask for advice and spread around the world a variety of news (from the coming-soon Illini Courtyard Café events to news on human trafficking, domestic violence and issues of immigration).

I hear and read about various negative effects technology has on our lives and leisure, and I see my students who often seem to feel lost without a cell phone or a laptop in their hands. However, I also see friends and families who are able to communicate across the ocean, and I am amazed by revolutions erupting due to people being able to interact with each other as never

before. The social consequences of technology use are profound and constitute an exciting and important topic of research that I explore further in my dissertation.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Family, the most important social environment for the majority of people in the world, represents an important context for leisure (Shaw, 1997). By spending time together, family members bond, improve communication and practice handling stressful situations (Johnson et al., 2006; Kelly, 1997; Shaw). Moreover, in families with children, parents also teach their children social and moral norms, pass on traditions, and create memories (Shaw; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Even though there are many benefits obtained from shared leisure time, families also face some issues while participating in joint leisure activities (Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Rosenblatt, Titus, Nevaldine, & Cunningham, 1979; Shaw, 1992). Considering the significant and rapidly occurring changes in modern society and family leisure associated with technological developments (Bryce & Rutter, 2003; Horst, 2010; Lenhart, 2008), we need to broaden our understanding of how families recreate and have fun in the modern world. This literature review will consist of three major sections: leisure and family, marital and family satisfaction, and the use of technology and social network sites by families. Theories that inform this research will also be discussed.

#### **2.2. Family Leisure**

Defining family leisure is a challenging task faced by many leisure researchers. In “the

North American context, [...] time that parents and children spend together in free time or recreational activities” has often been defined as family leisure (Shaw, 1997, p. 98). While this definition seems rather straightforward, Shaw stressed its controversial and confusing nature. In this section of the Literature Review I will describe the main issues associated with defining family leisure, discuss both positive and negative dimensions of family leisure and review factors influencing leisure patterns of youth.

### ***2.2.1. Issues Related to Definition of Family Leisure***

There are several issues that need to be discussed while defining family leisure: definition of family, appropriateness of the term “leisure,” and idealistic representation of leisure in the context of family. First, the definition of family leisure is complicated by the *definition of family* itself. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), “A family is a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered members of one family.” It is important to remember; however, that families differ with respect to the number, ages and genders of family members; and they include people who belong to different cultures, social classes, sexual orientations, and ability levels. Thus, it is almost impossible to generalize experiences that would be relevant to all families across the United States: single-parent, gay-lesbian, co-habitant, adoptive families and others (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; Kelly, 1997; Nelson, Capple, & Adkins, 1995; Shaw, 1997).

The majority of families with children in the U.S. (70%) still represent unions where both



mother and father are present in the residence (Kay, 2009). However, there are also married couples without children under 18 that represent 58% of all married couples (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Moreover, there are more than 11.6 million single-parent families in the United States and more than 1.7 million two-parent, unmarried families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Thus, using the traditional two-parent two-children family model, where spouses of different sexes are married creates a false idea about the reality of contemporary families and reproduces traditional stereotypes of how the “normal” family should look. Similar misconceptions also influence the economic, legal and social well-being of many families who do not fall into this traditional model due to the lack of policies that would take into consideration the diversity of family structure. To avoid misrepresentation and standardization, researchers have explored leisure of various “non-traditional” families. Adoptive (Zabriskie & Freeman, 2004), single-parent (Hornberger, Zabriskie, & Freeman, 2010), gay-lesbian (Bialeschki & Pearce, 1997), ethnic minority (Christenson et al., 2006), and families with members who have a disability (Dodd, Zabriskie, Widmer, & Eggett, 2009) received some attention in leisure literature. As a result of increasing awareness about diversity of families, a new definition of family was introduced. According to the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, *family* is defined as “two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitment to one another over time” (American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, 2001, p. 3).

Researchers are not the only ones who define important concepts in society. Laws and policies, as well as common ideologies support or discourage certain behaviors by different

family members, as well as assign their rights and responsibilities (Kay, 2000). Societal discourses dictate what it means to be a spouse (Cherlin, 2009) or a parent (Kay, 2006). For example, Cherlin claimed that due to extensive funding and promotion of marriage by government and religious organizations, marriage in the United States is highly desirable, especially compared to other countries in the world. While the importance of legal marriage has decreased with time, official relationships of spouses are still supported by the right to jointly file income tax returns and visit the spouse in the hospital. On the other hand, high level of divorce in the U.S., explained by Cherlin as a result of individualistic ideology, is also possible due to the existence of “no-fault” divorce law. According to this law, divorce will be granted even if only one spouse requests it.

Besides individualism, the ideologies of parenting also reflect and are maintained by the existence of certain laws and policies (Hobson, 2002; Kay, 2000). As Kay stated, in capitalist democracies “labor markets and welfare regimes continue to define fathers primarily as earner-providers for their families” (p. 15). Because there are additional pressures on fathers to provide financially for their children rather than to maintain healthy relationships with the child after divorce or separation, one could argue that policies emphasize fathers’ economic responsibilities more so than emotional ones (Kay; Lewis, 2000).

Due to a variety of factors, social expectations placed on parents are constantly evolving. In the two last decades, a mix of individualism, feminism and traditional family values led to changes in parental ideologies and altered people’s perceptions of what it means to be a parent (Trussell, 2009). Referred to as “intensive mothering” and “involved fathering” these parental

ideologies assume parents to be responsible not only for the safety and well-being of their children but also for their physical, mental and emotional development (Kay, 2009; Shaw, 2008). According to these parental ideologies, parents play active and almost aggressive roles in the lives and development of their children: mothers are expected to selflessly focus on the needs of their children, while fathers are supposed to be active helpers who not only provide financial support for their families, but also develop close emotional relationships with their children (Shaw). However, even though interaction and emotional involvement between fathers and children are emphasized more than before, cultural expectations regarding financial responsibilities of fathers have not decreased (Kay). Similarly, even though fathers now spend more time with their children than in previous decades, the time that mothers devote to interacting with their children has not gone down either (Coakley, 2009; Kay). Such intense involvement of parents in their children's lives influences everyday experiences and leisure participation of both parents and children.

Leisure plays an important role in this new parental ideology. In Kay's (2009) words, "parents actively seek to spend time together 'as a family' precisely because this is what it means to 'be' a family" (p. 22). However, although both mothers and fathers spend more time with their children (Kay, 2006; Shaw, 2008), their involvement in family leisure differs. For fathers, sport and other recreational activities provide safe opportunities to fulfill expectations of society for being a *good father* without the risk of being accused of being overly feminine (Coakley, 2009). At the same time, for mothers leisure provides opportunities to address heightened expectations for physical, mental and emotional development of their children (Coakley). Moreover, while

fathers play more entertaining or educational roles in their leisure engagements, a big portion of mothers' time with her children is taken by activities associated with care, emotional and social support (Kay; Shaw). Such a difference in how family leisure is experienced by different family members is related to the next issue associated with the definition of family leisure (Shaw, 1997).

This issue, as addressed by Shaw (1997), is related to the *usage of the term leisure* referring to the free-time activities done in the family context. While most of the time leisure is considered to be enjoyable and freely chosen, activities engaged in by family members (children, members of extended family) may be often more obligatory than intrinsically-motivated (Larson et al., 1997). Not all members of the family experience family leisure the same way. Considering that families often include people of different ages and ability levels, it often can be very challenging to find an activity that would be interesting, enjoyable and appropriate for all. The different roles of family members associated with their gender also influence how leisure is experienced. While for fathers and children leisure time is perceived as true leisure, many mothers may see it differently (Larson et al.; Shannon, 2003). For women in the family, celebrations, outings, and sport events involve a lot of work related to physical and emotional care for the rest of the family members, as well as planning, organization and facilitation of their leisure experiences (Bella, 1989; Shaw, 1992).

In order to account for family leisure that is not necessarily enjoyable and relaxing, Shaw and Dawson (2001) introduced the concept of *purposive leisure*. In their study, both mothers and fathers of preteen children (10-12 years of age) reported high value they ascribed to family leisure. However, they also admitted that their family leisure was not exactly intrinsically

motivated but rather had certain goals, including improving family functioning, communication and cohesion, as well as increased sense of belonging. Moreover, by organizing and facilitating family leisure parents hoped to positively influence their children's development through instilling in them interest in healthy lifestyles and certain moral values (Shaw & Dawson). Besides various benefits for physical, emotional and social development of their children, parents also expressed a sense of urgency about participating in leisure activities and their children developing good memories from their childhood (Shaw & Dawson). As a result of this study, Shaw and Dawson suggested that the term "purposive leisure" should be used when examining family leisure. They defined purposive leisure as "planned, facilitated, and executed by parents in order to achieve particular short- and long-term goals" (p. 228). Shaw (2008) suggested that due to the expectations for the "active involvement" of parents, family leisure was "a continuation of the attentive parent role for mothers, rather than a break from paid work and other obligatory activities" (p. 691). Among other studies that discussed family leisure as purposive leisure were those by Trussell and Shaw (2007) and by Wiersma and Fifer (2008).

The third issue associated with research on family leisure is the often *unconditionally positive representation* of outcomes of family leisure. Many studies have argued that leisure provides an important opportunity for spouses to adjust to changes in family life, to develop or improve family communication and to pass on values to their children (Johnson et al., 2006; Kelly, 1997; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Trussell & Shaw, 2007, 2009; West & Merriam, 2009, Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). However, besides its many obvious benefits, family leisure may also lead to disagreements and increased tension (Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Shaw, 1992). For

example, Orthner (1980) (as cited in Orthner & Mancini, 1991) claimed that stress from leisure conflicts, as well as household responsibilities and sex-related problems are among the main sources of disagreements among couples. Shaw even suggested that these issues should be addressed on the theoretical/paradigmatic level. Criticizing interactional and sociological-feminist paradigms for their one-sided (either positive or negative) views of family leisure experiences and outcomes, she suggested that we should “conceptualize family leisure as inherently contradictory” (p. 106) and “expect positive and negative aspects to coexist” (p. 107). In line with the Inherently Contradictory Paradigm (Shaw, 1997), I will further discuss the benefits and negative outcomes of family leisure that were identified in previous research.

### **2.2.2. *Positive Dimensions of Family Leisure***

Until the late 1980s and early 1990s, the traditional image of family leisure was rather positive (Kelly, 1997). In the words of Kelly, “The premise was primarily positive; leisure and family are good for each other” (p. 132). Among the various beneficial effects of family leisure mentioned in the literature were increased marital satisfaction and marital stability, improved communication and family functioning, and general increase in satisfaction with family life. Family leisure was also found to be an important factor in the development of children in the family.

One of the extensively examined benefits of family leisure is *marital satisfaction*. Marital satisfaction attracted special attention of leisure researchers due to its potential to influence people’s general satisfaction with life. Indeed, even though staying together can have certain

benefits in and of itself (e.g., financial well-being, development of children), having a healthy relationship and being happy in marriage have a real impact on spouses' emotional and physical well-being. A number of studies discussed the relationship between leisure and marital satisfaction (e.g., Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Johnson et al., 2006; Orthner, 1976). A detailed overview of the literature on leisure and marital satisfaction will be included in the next section of the Literature Review.

Another positive effect of family leisure identified in the literature is improved *marital cohesiveness*, which is defined as “bonds of intimacy” and is associated with strong union of family members based on solidarity and intimate communication (West & Merriam, 2009, p. 352). A number of studies on outdoor recreation have dealt with issues of marital cohesiveness. For example, West and Merriam found that due to an increase in intimate communication offered via outdoor recreation, family cohesiveness was moderately improved. The authors suggested that characteristics of outdoor recreation such as isolation from the everyday environment, common struggle against hardships of nature, ritualization, trip planning and memories contributed to improved interaction and, thus cohesiveness of family.

Ragheb (1975) (as cited in Hawks, 1991) also found that satisfaction with family leisure was positively correlated with family cohesiveness. The correlations were particularly strong for two out of four types of leisure activities – outdoor and social types, while family cohesiveness and media and sport-related activities were not correlated. A study by Hill (1988) supported Ragheb's findings regarding the relationship between outdoor recreation and family cohesiveness. However, unlike Ragheb's study, Hill found that marital stability was positively

related to outdoor activities (as well as to other recreational activities, such as active sports, card games, and traveling) but no negative association between marital stability and TV-watching was found.

Hebblethwaite and Norris (2010), who explored intergenerational leisure pursuits, reported that the leisure of grandparents and their adult grandchildren involved positive experiences and navigating tensions. On one side, both generations named benefits of shared leisure such as the opportunity to develop stronger bonds, to learn more about each other's personalities, histories, experiences, and to develop common interests. On the other side, intergenerational leisure between grandparents and their adult grandchildren also was challenging at times due to differences in expectations, personalities, moral values, and preferences for leisure.

*Communication* between family members and its relationship to family leisure has also been explored by leisure researchers. Called "the pipeline to human relationships" (Bienvenu, 1969, p. 117), a "vehicle for social interaction" (Bienvenu, p. 117), and "the process of creating and sharing meanings" (Galvin & Brommel, 1986, p. 9), communication is believed to have an important impact on the relationships between people. Among characteristics of positive communication are good listening habits, freedom of expression, understanding, and acceptance. On the other hand, negative communication is often associated with criticism, sarcasm, lack of trust and acceptance (Bienvenu).

A number of studies conducted in the leisure field examined family communication (Bandoroff & Scherer, 1994; Huff, Widmer, McCoy, & Hill, 2003; Smith, Freeman, & Zabriskie,



2009). For example, Smith et al. found a positive relationship between core and balance types of family leisure and improved family communication. Moreover, communication was found to have a mediating effect between both types of leisure and improved family functioning. In their study of parents of preteen children (10-12 years of age), Shaw and Dawson (2001) reported that parents ascribed high value to family leisure. They believed that common leisure improved family functioning, communication and cohesion, as well as increased sense of belonging. Participants in this study purposively used leisure with their children to develop better communication and relationships in the family.

A number of studies that focused on the benefits of outdoor recreation reported improved communication and negotiation skills between family members. For example, participants in a study that evaluated an outdoor-based therapeutic program for families with troubled adolescents reported that as a result of their participation in the program parents' and children's approaches to conflict became more constructive, families started using more successful negotiation techniques, and improved their ability to express feelings (Bandoroff & Scherer, 1994). Huff et al. (2003) also suggested that along with "the impact of the staff," characteristics of challenging outdoor family programs such as "new environment," "working together," and "extended family time" (p. 27) provided a foundation for positive changes and improved communication within the family system.

Improved *family functioning* is another benefit of family leisure. According to the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family System (Olson, 1993), the healthy, well-functioning family is characterized by positive communication that provides a basis for improved cohesion

and adaptability (i.e., the ability of a family to be flexible and adapt to the challenges of everyday life). Combining Circumplex Model of Marital and Family System with core (cheaper and easily accessible, done on a regular basis) and balance (requiring more skills and money, changing over the life span) types of leisure (Kelly, 1999), Zabriskie and McCormick (2001) found a positive relationship between participation in both core and balance family leisure and family cohesion and adaptability. These findings were confirmed by Hornberger et al. (2010), who conducted a similar study among single-parent families. They also found that the level of family leisure participation among single-parent families was lower than among traditional families. Moreover, single-parent families participated more in the core types of activities than in balance activities. The authors argued that higher level of participation in core leisure activities, known for their association with family cohesion, can be explained by the need of single-parent families to have a feeling of belonging to the family unit with strong bonds. Nevertheless, the study found a certain similarity between the functioning of single-parent and dual-parent families: in both cases the family functioning was strongly related to the family leisure involvement.

Another study on family functioning and its association with leisure involvement was conducted by Dodd et al. (2009). Their research focused on families that included children with developmental disabilities. Its results showed that similarly to normative families, leisure participation of families with children with disabilities predicted successful family functioning. While families with children who had disabilities were involved in both core and balance leisure on the same level as normative families, only the core type of activities was associated with

family cohesion, adaptability, and overall functioning. The authors argued that a heightened effect of core type of leisure might be explained by the fact that due to having a child with disability, families must have developed sufficient adaptability during first years of the child's life. Thus, they did not have the need to use balance family leisure to improve adaptability.

Family leisure also was found to be an important factor in the *development of children* in the family. The involvement of youth in positive and constructive recreational activities is a goal of many social institutions including family, schools, recreation agencies, and various governmental organizations (Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005). According to Shaw (2008), many parents do not see leisure as simply having fun with their children, but as a "highly significant part of child-rearing through which children will be exposed to a range of positive developmental influences and will learn lessons important for their success in life" (p. 698). Through leisure participation parents attempt to achieve a broad variety of developmental goals (Nelson et al., 1995; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Physical activities are often designed to improve game skills (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008), to encourage children to adopt healthier lifestyles (Shaw & Dawson), and to control obesity (Tremblay & Willms, 2003). Parents also believe that physical activities (along with other leisure pursuits) provide children with opportunity to boost their self-confidence and self-esteem, to meet friends and to develop various life and social skills (Trussell & Shaw, 2007; Wiersma & Fifer), including independence, self-reliance, responsibility, self-discipline, and respect (Dunn, Kinney, & Hofferth, 2003). Among the benefits of family leisure named by parents was the opportunity to pass on certain values and moral norms to their children (Nelson et al., Shaw & Dawson), to reduce children's and adolescents' participation in deviant

activities (Bandoroff & Scherer, 1994), to show their children what it means to be a family (Shaw & Dawson), to spend quality time together (Trussell & Shaw) and to create memories of a happy childhood (Shaw & Dawson).

### ***2.2.3. Negative Dimensions of Family Leisure***

While family leisure is often idealized by the media, leisure providers, and the general public (Shaw, 2001), academic studies have also highlighted the *negative effects and problems associated with family leisure*. For example, Orthner (1980) (as cited in Orthner & Mancini, 1991) showed that leisure-related conflicts could be more stressful than conflicts related to child rearing and finances. According to Shaw, negative effects of leisure can be related to stress and extra-work associated with organization and facilitation of leisure activities, differences in leisure interests between family members, and variations in physical and developmental abilities of family members.

The possibility of conflict brought by leisure was discussed by Rosenblatt et al. (1979). In their research on families of teachers who took summer-long vacations they found that among couples who had a high potential for problems (differences in values, disrespect, physical violence), the level of tension increased during the summer break. On the other hand, couples with lower potential for problems experienced lower levels of general tension. Negative outcomes of leisure were also discussed by Shaw (2001). Combining data from three different studies, she showed that while parents believed family leisure was important, they also identified various challenges to family leisure engagements. They included time stress (among double-

earner families), challenges on the job market, unequal distribution of family work, difficulties in finding activities that would fit everyone's interests and developmental levels, and centrality of television. Shaw also suggested that placing priority on joint family leisure engagements may lead to sacrifice of individual types of leisure among family members. A very important point raised by Shaw was related to the idealization of family leisure. Due to the unconditionally positive representation of family leisure by the media and leisure providers, many families may have an unrealistic expectation of what family leisure should look like and thus get disappointed when their own family time does not correspond to these ideals.

Hebblethwaite and Norris (2010) discussed leisure behaviors and relationships between grandparents and their adult grandchildren. They found that along with benefits of leisure, both generations experienced certain challenges and had contradictory feelings about their common leisure. Such ambivalence was experienced more intensely by adolescent grandchildren and was related to different expectations, personalities, moral values, preferences for leisure, as well as to feelings of obligation to spend more time together with their grandparents. Such ambivalence in feelings tended to go away when the grandchildren became young adults and started to appreciate the "opportunity to learn from their grandparents and to develop a sense of family history together" (p. 502).

Another study that examined difficulties faced by families in relation to leisure was conducted by Trussell and Shaw (2007) in a rural area in Canada. While respondents emphasized the importance of leisure in fostering family togetherness, they also reported many difficulties associated with trying to organize their shared leisure time. Among these problems was the

traditional distribution of work among mothers and fathers. While men usually spent the majority of time performing farm-related work, women were responsible for childcare, housekeeping and often out-of-farm employment. The need to balance these responsibilities, including occasional farm work during peak times, took a toll on women's energy level and caused significant stress. Realizing the importance of leisure outside of the farm for their children's socialization and development, women spent a lot of time facilitating their involvement in various sports. Due to the distant location of their homes from recreation facilities, providing transportation took a big part of the women's free time and often left them exhausted. As a result, children often had to give up some of their activities. Another problem faced by farmers' families was their dependency on weather and a farm life cycle. While women with children had a chance to go for one-day excursions and rare vacations, the men often had to stay at home due to unpredictable schedules, livestock responsibilities, and expenses associated with hiring extra-help for the time of the trip. Such gender-based division of responsibilities and differences in schedules was called by Trussell and Shaw "a single parenthood within the marital context" (p. 382).

Wiersma and Fifer (2008) also explored issues faced by parents who strived to provide their children with opportunities to participate in various leisure activities and especially youth sport. Even though parents believed "it was worth it" (p. 517), they also reported stress associated with the need to provide instrumental (monetary expenses, time) and emotional support to their children. Parents also expressed their worries about how their children's intense involvement in sport and the extremely competitive environment of today's youth leagues

impacted their children's education and general well-being.

#### ***2.2.4. Factors Influencing Leisure of Children and Youth***

While family leisure includes leisure of adolescent children in the family, this section will provide some additional information on leisure of children and youth in families. Leisure and the development of children are likely to be influenced by opportunities shaped by families' social class, cultural or religious belongings, geographical location and other factors. For instance, the socio-economic status of the family has been shown to significantly influence the leisure involvement of adolescents (Lareau, 2002; Trussell, 2006). As Lareau has shown, middle-class families place strong emphasis on the participation of children in organized sport and recreational activities. They also practice reasoning in their language use (i.e., explain why certain things should/should not be done rather than order their children to do/not to do those things). On the other hand, working class and poor families often leave leisure activities for children to decide and organize. They also often use directive rather than reasoning language (i.e., order their children to do/not to do certain things rather than explain why those things should/should not be done). According to this study, a sense of entitlement and social connections of youth are also positively influenced by their belonging to the middle class.

Trussell (2006) also studied the gap in participation in organized and not-organized activities between youth from different social classes. Her findings supported Lareau's claim that socio-economic status influences adolescents' involvement in sport, especially competitive sport. According to Trussell's study, despite various initiatives by local municipalities, sport

organizations, and corporate sponsorship of programs aimed at reducing fees, children of lower socio-economic status often cannot afford participation in competitive sport. Trussell explained that besides direct costs of those programs (i.e., registration fees) families have to include in their budget “hidden” indirect costs (i.e., equipment, transportation, uniforms), which often prevent their children from participation. In order to make various leisure activities more accessible to children from different social classes, Trussell argued that direct as well as indirect expenses need to be taken into consideration. Her study also found gender to influence leisure participation of youth, with girls participating less than boys in organized and recreational sports.

In a study by Raymore, Godbey, and Crawford (1994), the socioeconomic status of adolescents also was found to influence their self-esteem and perception of constraints on leisure. Adolescents from families with higher socioeconomic status had higher levels of self-esteem and perceived their intrapersonal constraints to be lower. SES had no effect on interpersonal or structural constraints. Moreover, teens with lower self-esteem perceived higher levels of interpersonal, intrapersonal and total (a sum of the scores from interpersonal, intrapersonal and institutional) constraints. Since girls had lower self-esteem than boys, they also reported more constraints, which could explain Trussell’s (2006) finding of lower involvement of girls in recreational and competitive sports. Other studies also discussed links between participation in physical activities and adolescents’ self-esteem (Biddle & Wang, 2003).

Another factor that influences family leisure patterns is its geographical location. As research by Trussell and Shaw (2007) showed, families in rural areas might be disadvantaged due to the lack of public transportation and opportunities for youth to participate in organized



leisure close to home, as well as by the unpredictable work schedules of their parents. Parental leisure in rural areas is also influenced by the need to provide transportation for their children and by the abundance of work. However, at the same time, rural youth may benefit from multiple opportunities provided by access to vast stretches of land, the natural environment, integration of work and leisure, and closeness with family members (Trussell & Shaw, 2009). Unlike children from rural areas, urban youth may be constrained by the lack of opportunities for interaction with nature, overprotective attitudes of their parents, overemphasis on organized leisure activities and centrality of technology in urban life (Louv, 2005). According to Louv, these trends related to leisure involvement among urban children and youth have serious negative effects on their mental, physical and psychological development.

A number of studies have also focused on motivations, experiences and viewpoints of adolescents toward leisure. For example, Larson (1983) conducted a study on high-school students and leisure time they spent with families and friends. He found that youth valued activities they engaged in with friends for the high level of enjoyment, freedom and predominantly positive feedback provided by the peer group. Leisure with friends was also associated with lower performance in school, deviant behavior and frequent mood changes. On the other hand, their time spent with family was more constrained, formal, and involved both positive and negative feedback.

Caldwell et al. (1999) examined why teenagers sometimes get bored during their leisure time. Testing different theories the authors found that one of the reasons for adolescents' boredom during leisure was lack of autonomy which is crucial during teenage years. However,

Caldwell et al. also found a negative association between perceived parental monitoring and boredom, potentially because of facilitation provided by parents. The authors discussed the importance of finding a balanced level of control by parents: while some level of facilitation provided by parents may be welcomed by their children, the excess of it may lead to the loss of control and interest on the part of the children. The second reason for boredom among adolescents was lack of choice or inability to decide what activity to choose due to various norms and messages coming from parents and peer groups (Caldwell et al.). The effect of adults' involvement on adolescents' leisure activities was also studied by Mahoney and Stattin (2000). The authors found that structured leisure activities were negatively associated with teenagers' antisocial behavior, while less structured activities were associated with higher level of antisocial behavior, deviant peer relations, and poor relationships with parents.

While the parental influence on children's leisure tends to wane with age, peer groups begin to have a stronger influence on youth during their teenage years (Russell, 2009). According to Berndt (1982), communication between friends increases and becomes more intimate when children reach early adolescence. The study by de Bruyn and Cillessen (2008) showed that popularity among peers may shape leisure patterns of early adolescents. While the types of activities change only slightly for girls depending on their popularity, leisure behavior of popular and unpopular boys tends to be markedly different. In Corsaro and Eder (1990) study, boys in general reported enjoying activities associated with cars and computers. However, popular boys disliked computers and preferred sports (Corsaro & Eder), shopping, talking with friends on the phone, and participation in social activities (de Bruyn & Cillessen). Thus, when

conducting research on adolescents' leisure participation, it is important to remember that time spent with family might not be the major portion of youth's leisure. Moreover, experiences teenage children have while participating in family leisure may differ from family to family.

All of the issues discussed above, including problems with defining "family" and "family leisure," as well as the idealistic representation of family leisure in modern society, were briefly addressed in the literature. Various studies have been conducted on leisure of non-traditional families, on purposive family leisure, and on both positive and negative outcomes of family leisure. Similarly, in my research I did not limit my sample to only traditional types of families, nor did I assume that leisure has only beneficial outcomes. While conducting my study, I stayed open to the possibility of both positive and negative outcomes of leisure, as well as I viewed family leisure as more purposive, rather than intrinsically motivated. I also took into consideration factors such as race/ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and geographical location of the family, as well as the levels of control and autonomy offered to children in the family and the influence of peer groups on teenage participants.

### **2.3. Marital Satisfaction and Satisfaction with Family Life**

Dysfunctional and unsatisfying marital relationships have undeniably negative effects on both spouses and children (Amato, 2000; Booth & Amato, 2001; Perrone, Webb, & Blalock, 2005) and decrease their life satisfaction (Perrone et al.; Salvatore & Munoz Sastre, 2001). Such relationships were found to be associated with a decrease in children's psychological well-being (Booth & Amato), psychological distress and adjustment, feelings of emotional insecurity

(Cummings, Schermerhorn, Davies, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2006; Harold, Shelton, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2004), as well as lower levels of achievement and increased behavioral problems (Cherlin et al., 1991; Linville et al., 2010). In some cases, high-conflict parental relationships may lead to various psychological disorders among children (Roseby & Johnston, 1998).

Unhappy marital relationships may lead to various outcomes, such as divorce. Even though social acceptance of divorce has increased during the last several decades (Amato, 2000), it still often has negative connotation. However, it should be noticed that in high-conflict relationships divorce is likely to be beneficial and lead to a higher level of psychological well-being for those who are involved (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Booth & Amato, 2001). While divorce is one of the possible outcomes of marital dissatisfaction, there are many cases when despite high levels of conflict and dissatisfaction couples stay together (Lavner & Bradbury, 2010). At the same time, seemingly low-distressed families often decide to separate (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Lavner & Bradbury). Moreover, even couples who divorce often do not make the decision as soon as the first marital problems occur (Amato, 2000) and may go through a long process of growing dissatisfaction. Thus, the assumption that all couples who are not divorced are satisfied with their relationships would be incorrect. As a result, this study focused on marital satisfaction and not on marital stability.

In the next sub-section, I will discuss issues associated with the definition of marital satisfaction. Then, I will describe research that focused on factors influencing marital satisfaction. I will also discuss how different researchers defined satisfaction of family members

with their family lives and factors influencing family satisfaction.

### ***2.3.1. Marital Satisfaction***

Marital satisfaction was defined as “an individual’s subjective evaluation of the overall nature of marriage” (Gelles, 1995, p. 232) that reflects the degree to which an individual’s expectations towards marriage are reflected in his/her own marriage (Bahr, 1989; Gelles). Researchers who study marital satisfaction face several difficulties, including the fluid and subjective nature of the concept of marital satisfaction itself. According to Popenoe and Whitehead (1999), for many people in contemporary society marriage is no longer a social structure existing for the purpose of successful upbringing of children (Smock, 2000). It is now seen more as an “intimate relationship” (p. 4) in which sexual intimacy and close friendship of soul-mates are the most valued dimensions. Recent studies support the importance of these factors. For example, Meltzer and McNulty (2010) found that sexual frequency and satisfaction of partners, as well as wife’s perception of her attractiveness had positive effect on marital satisfaction of both partners.

As a result of cultural and societal changes, the number of women working outside of the home as well as their level of independence has significantly increased in recent decades. These changes influenced women’s attitudes toward responsibilities associated with marriage. Popenoe and Whitehead (1999) claimed that many contemporary women prefer not to get married due to the amount of housework that would be required of them. Those who do marry, evaluate their marital satisfaction based on their ability to pursue a career outside of home and expect to share

household responsibilities with their spouse. In support of this assertion, Helms, Walls, Crouter, and McHale (2010) found that in marital dyads where both spouses worked, the level of marital satisfaction and the equality in sharing housework were closely related.

The perception and the meaning of marriage may change not only as a result of societal and cultural changes, but also due to personal development of each partner, context of the relationship and different stages in marriage. While it is generally believed that marital satisfaction follows a U-shape pattern over the lifespan, with a decline after the birth of the first child (Hirschberger, Srivastava, Marsh, Cowan, & Cowan, 2009) and an increase after the last child leaves the house (Anderson, Russell, & Schuman, 1983; Gelles, 1995), other studies have questioned such development in marital satisfaction. VanLaningham, Johnson, and Amato (2001) found that marital satisfaction follows a more linear declining trajectory, with steep declines in the earliest and the latest years of marriage. On the other hand, the research by Lavner and Bradbury (2010) showed that not all couples follow the same pattern in marital satisfaction. In their study, couples who had an initially higher level of satisfaction were able to preserve it on a relatively high level, while those couples who had a lower level of marital satisfaction were more likely to experience even further declines in satisfaction over a 10 year period. The former and the latter types of couples differed on personality traits, stress, aggression, and communication behavior.

Along with its changing nature, the subjectivity of the concept of marital satisfaction is another difficulty faced by the researchers. It is almost impossible to identify a set of characteristics of spouses or relationships that would make marriage satisfying for every

individual: what works for one couple might be unacceptable for the other. There were many attempts to find what factors contribute to marital satisfaction. While an exhaustive list of those characteristics would be impossible to develop, Rosen-Grandon, Myers, and Hattie (2004) named love, loyalty, and shared values among the most influential characteristics of relationships. Among other factors contributing to happy marriage Rosen-Grandon et al. listed respect, forgiveness, romance, support, sexuality/intimacy, and “open communication and agreement on expression of affection” (p. 65).

In their review of literature on marital quality, Larson and Holman (1994) identified a variety of factors that influence marital satisfaction, marital stability and marital quality. Among factors that were found to be associated with quality of marriage were background and contextual factors, individual traits and behaviors of spouses and couples' interactional processes. Each of these groups of factors also included sub-groups, some of which will be further discussed in this review.

Each spouse brings into a newly created union a legacy of his or her background, including family of origin and relationships in this family; sociocultural factors such as age at marriage, income and education; as well as current contexts of relationships with friends (Larson & Holman, 1994), family members (Reczek, Liu, & Umberson, 2010), and other people. Individual traits and behaviors also affect spouse's satisfaction with marriage (Larson & Holman, 1994). Among these traits are personality and the physical and mental health of the spouse. For example, depression (Whisman, Uebelacker, & Weinstock, 2004), neuroticism, chronic stress, low self-esteem, trait anger (Lavner & Bradbury, 2010) and impulsivity (Kelly & Conley, 1987)

were found to negatively affect marital stability. Individual behaviors such as substance abuse, specifically heavy alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking, were also shown to have a negative effect on marital satisfaction (Homish, Leonard, Kozlowski, & Cornelius, 2009). On the other hand, sociability was found to positively influence marital stability and quality (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978).

Couples' interactional processes that have an impact on marital satisfaction are homogamy and interpersonal similarity (including similarity in socio-economic backgrounds, religious affiliation, values and beliefs), as well as interactional history of the couple (Larson & Holman, 1994). For example, Dew (2007, 2008, 2009) found that spouses' different views on financial matters have a negative effect on their marital satisfaction. Disagreements related to spending patterns may lead to tension and conflict, decrease in time spouses spend together, as well as increase in the likelihood of divorce.

The interactional history of the couple reflected in acquaintance, cohabitation, premarital sex, premarital pregnancy; as well as interactional processes, such as communication, conflict, and consensus building also have an influence on marital satisfaction (Larson & Holman, 1994). Such interactional processes as “verbal and physical aggression, observed expressions of interest, affection, and humor, and for wives only, observed expressions of anger and contempt” (Lavner & Bradbury, 2010, p. 1183) also were found to be different for satisfied and unsatisfied couples. Equality in sharing household responsibilities is another factor affecting marital satisfaction (Helms et al., 2010; Perrone et al., 2005).

Conflict is one of the most often discussed interactional processes in studies on marital



satisfaction. While conflict in relationships may lead to divorce (Booth & Amato, 2001), it does not always result in dissolution of the union. In fact, according to Conflict Theory (White & Klein, 2008), a certain amount of conflict is needed in the family in order to resolve issues and disagreements, as well as to improve communication and interaction between family members. However, what is important is what kind of conflict family engages in (constructive or destructive). Destructive behavior (such as yelling and criticizing) by either husband or wife, as well as withdrawal behavior among husbands, were found to be associated with a decrease in marital satisfaction (Birditt, Brown, Orbuch, & McIlvane, 2010). Interestingly, while constructive behavior (such as active listening) is usually assumed to be beneficial for relationships, Birditt et al. found that constructive behavior worked only when both partners were engaged in it. In cases when one spouse was involved in constructive communication and the other spouse withdrew, the potential for divorce did not decrease. The authors speculated that withdrawal by one spouse may be perceived by the other spouse as indifference and a lack of involvement in the relationships and, thus, be associated with lower marital satisfaction.

Support is another interactional process that predicts marital satisfaction (Lawrence et al., 2008). Studies showed that what spouses consider to be an appropriate expression of support differs by gender. According to Graham, Fischer, Crawford, Fitzpatrick, and Bina (2000), for wives the amount of support affects marital satisfaction more than support adequacy, while for husbands the support adequacy tends to be the more important factor. Moreover, social support was also found to be especially important for the marital adjustment of women with children, but not for their husbands.

### ***2.3.2. Leisure and Marital Satisfaction***

One of the factors that was often found to be associated with marital quality and the satisfaction of spouses is leisure (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002; Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Johnson et al., 2006; Orthner, 1976; Smith, Snyder, Trull, & Monsma, 1988; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). A large portion of one's leisure time is spent in the company of family members (Shaw, 1997). Despite a general belief about a decrease in leisure time among dual earner couples, contemporary spouses find a way to spend as much time together as they did in the 1960s and 1970s (Voorpostel, van der Lippe, & Gershuny, 2010). In general, couples spend more than half of their leisure time in each other's presence. Such an ability to overcome structural constraints of employment and other responsibilities, the authors claimed, may indicate an increased importance of personal satisfaction and intimacy in marital relationships (Voorpostel et al.).

In order to understand what types of leisure activities are associated with marital satisfaction, Orthner (1975) divided leisure into three types (individual, parallel, and joint), based on the level of interaction between spouses. He found a positive correlation between joint leisure activities and marital satisfaction, while individual activities were negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. The effect of parallel activities (when spouses spend time in the same space without interaction) differed by gender and changed over time. In the first years of marriage and after children leave home and spouses retire, parallel activities were perceived more negatively because of increased importance of joint leisure.

More recent studies have shown that relationships between different types of leisure

(joint, individual, and parallel) and marital satisfaction differ from case to case. For example, Crawford et al. (2002) found that companionship in leisure had a different effect on marital satisfaction depending on how much spouses enjoyed the activity. According to the authors, if the couple or the husband participated in an activity that only he liked and his wife did not, the wife's satisfaction with marriage was likely to be lower (Crawford et al.). Baldwin, Ellis, and Baldwin (1999), on the other hand, suggested that individual leisure is not always associated with marital distress. The authors examined the marital satisfaction of runners who were supported by their spouses and those runners who did not have their wives' support. As participants reported, in cases where one spouse's involvement in individual leisure activity was supported by the other spouse (through encouragement, discussions, or watching), satisfaction with marriage was higher.

Further exploration of the relationships between leisure and marital satisfaction showed that the quality of time spent together was more important than the quantity (Berg, Trot, Schneider, & Allison, 2001; Crawford et al., 2002; Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Johnson et al., 2006). For example, Berg et al. found that the time spent in joint leisure participation did not significantly affect people's satisfaction with their relationships. However, satisfaction with leisure participation had an effect on people's satisfaction with their relationships (Johnson et al.). According to the authors, particularly satisfaction with core shared leisure activities was positively correlated with marital satisfaction. The ability of spouses to adjust their leisure to specific circumstances and changes in family structure was also mentioned as one of the important factors that influenced marital satisfaction.

Holman and Jacquart (1988) also found that the relationship between marital satisfaction and leisure time depends on the level of interaction and attention between spouses during leisure. According to Flora and Segrin (1998), satisfaction from participation in joint leisure activities with friends and family members depends on perceived social skills and positivity of the partner or “how enjoyable, supportive, or cheerful one’s partner is” (p. 713). Thus, without consideration of the quality of interaction during leisure time, it is impossible to make a conclusion about how satisfactory this time is and what effect it has on marital satisfaction.

### **2.3.3. *Satisfaction with Family Life***

Satisfaction with family life is another concept that received significant attention among researchers from various social science disciplines. Similar to marital satisfaction it is also fluid and dependent on changes in social norms, life stage of the family, and individual development of family members. Subjectivity is another characteristic of this concept that affects how different people define satisfaction with family life.

Both issues – its changing nature and subjectivity of satisfaction with family life – were discussed by Bowen (1988a) who introduced The Value-Behavior Congruency Model of Family Life Satisfaction. This model allowed families to define and assess their family satisfaction based on their own set of values. Bowen justified the need for such a conceptually novel approach because of the increasing diversity of family types and spousal backgrounds, as well as by the lack of a single evaluation approach that would be able to account for a variety of values held by families. As suggested by Bowen, the existence of an evaluation system that is able to account

only for the beliefs of one type of families creates the assumption “that there is one desirable way for families to function; the implicit assumption is that other ways are undesirable” (p. 458). Without specifying types of behavior leading to family satisfaction, Bowen explained that according to the Social Exchange Theory, “satisfying family relationships may be conceptualized as equitable reciprocal exchanges based on the ability of family members to jointly realize family-related values in behavior” (p. 459). An inability to realize, follow or agree on those values among family members is likely to lead to dissatisfaction and frustration. Bowen’s approach stressed the importance of exploring the views of all family members.

While family members are the ones who define their satisfaction with family life, the values and expectations that affect family satisfaction are influenced by community and society. However, research that would address community and societal influence on family satisfaction is scarce. As Toth, Brown, and Xu (2002) stated, “Family and community studies have developed in relative isolation of one another” (p. 182). Conducting a study among rural residents, Toth et al. found that a higher level of community satisfaction was associated with a higher level of family life satisfaction. Moreover, rural residents had higher levels of satisfaction with both community and family life.

Along with the effect of community, another institutional factor that was suggested to have an effect on family life satisfaction is work. Bowen (1988b) introduced a conceptual model of the relationship between corporate support mechanisms and the work and family lives of employees. According to this model, corporate culture and philosophy, as well as work environment influence outcomes both at work (e.g., job satisfaction, productivity, commitment)

and at home (e.g., family life satisfaction, level of role strain/conflict, well-being of dependents needing care). The employee's perceptions and circumstances explained differences in outcomes among individuals in the same work environment.

A more recent study by Frye and Breugh (2004) focused on work-family or "work activities interfering with family matters" (p. 197) and family-work conflict or "family activities interfering with work matters" (p. 197). It found that both job and family satisfaction were associated with the work-family conflict. The authors also found that the presence of family-friendly policies in the workplace, hours worked per week, and a supervisor's support were related to work-family conflict. At the same time, family-work conflict was associated with the childcare responsibilities of the employee's and a supervisor's support. Michel and Clark (2009) study; however, reported different results. According to this study, it was not the conflict itself that influenced family and job satisfaction, but rather a person's affective dispositions (traits) influenced how he or she saw the situation – as a conflict or as enrichment. The authors argued that these traits are relatively stable over time and that they may be divided in two groups: positive affect (tendency to be energetic, excited, and joyful) and negative affect (tendency to be anxious, afraid, and angry). In Michel and Clark's study, respondents with higher positive traits reported higher level of work-family and family-work enrichment, as well as higher job and family satisfaction. At the same time, those who had a tendency for negative affect scored higher on family-job and job-family conflict, as well as displayed lower levels of job and family satisfaction.

The cultural background of a person, as well as his or her gender were also found to

influence satisfaction with family life. For example, Lavee and Ben-Ari (2008) conducted research in Israel where they compared individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations of Jews and Arabs and how their culture influenced their perceptions of everyday experiences. Specifically, they explored how positive and negative everyday experiences (hassles and uplifts) influenced their life and family satisfaction. They found that idiocentrics (i.e., individualistic people) perceived issues related to caring for family members, lack of time for themselves, health-related and work-related issues as more stressful than allocentrics (i.e., people with more collectivistic orientation). Idiocentrics were also more worried about issues of security and politics. At the same time, idiocentrics perceived children and home as more uplifting, while allocentrics saw family, self, and role-related issues as more uplifting. In both groups life satisfaction was more related to everyday hassles, while family satisfaction was more strongly related to everyday uplifts. However, the extent of this influence differed between the two groups. While for more individualistic respondents everyday experiences (hassles and uplifts) were primarily related to life satisfaction, collectivist respondents reported that their positive or negative life experiences had greater effect on their family satisfaction. The authors attributed the difference to the greater centrality of family in the lives of people with collectivist cultural orientation.

Variance in the importance placed by men and women on family experiences was discussed by Freisinger (1994). The author found that fathers' parental satisfaction was influenced by leisure time spent with their children, but the same was not true for the mothers. Freisinger suggested that due to existing differences in parental roles and social norms men's and

women's attitudes toward their time spent with children vary. Women are more likely not to see this time as leisure, while for men leisure is often the only time when they interact with their child. Freisinger also found that marital satisfaction was strongly associated with parental satisfaction among both men and women. Presence of children in the family was found to be an important factor that influences family satisfaction. For example, in Toth et al.'s (2002) study, participants who had small children reported higher levels of family satisfaction.

A number of studies also explored family satisfaction among families who had children with disabilities. Lightsey and Sweeney's (2008) study on families with children with developmental disabilities defined family satisfaction as "parental satisfaction with the adaptability and cohesion of their family" (p. 213). Their research found that stress, emotion-oriented coping style, and meaning in life, mediated by family cohesion, accounted for differences in family satisfaction, while generalized self-efficacy did not. Another study that explored experiences of families with children with a disability (autism) was conducted by DeGrace (2004). Participants in her study felt "robbed of normal satisfying and meaningful family experiences such as having fun, going on holiday or enjoying some respite from managing their child" and reported "the whole of family life revolving around autism" (p. 136). The author recommended interventions which would help families shift their focus from pacifying and occupying the child with disability to participation in shared meaningful activities as a family.



#### ***2.3.4. Leisure and Satisfaction with Family Life***

Shared leisure time spent with family members is often associated with a higher level of family and life satisfaction (Metzelaars, 1994, as cited in Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). This section will mainly present studies that are specifically focused on satisfaction with family life since parenting and other dimensions of family life were previously covered in the section on family leisure. The major theories employed in the studies on the role of leisure in satisfaction with family life are the System Theory and, based on this theory, The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning. According to this model, introduced by Zabriskie and McCormick (2001), in order to maintain healthy family functioning a family's cohesion and adaptability should be balanced. Family's needs for change (adaptability) and continuity (cohesion) can be met through participation in core and balance leisure activities. Participation in stable, everyday, easy-to-master core activities helps family to bond and enhance cohesion, while family's involvement in more changing, challenging, and demanding balance activities provides the opportunity to practice family's adaptability to change (Kelly, 1999).

The assumption that families need both core and balance leisure activities for healthy functioning was formed on the premise of the System Theory and its branch – the Circumplex Model. The Circumplex Model, introduced by Olson (1993), has been widely used by family therapists and applied in research in various social science disciplines. According to this model, families can be divided into four different types: enmeshed, rigid, disengaged, and chaotic. This classification was based on a family's degree of cohesion and its ability to adapt to various circumstances. A family was considered to be well-functioning if cohesion and adaptability were

well balanced. Families were assumed to be systems that are constantly trying to reach a balance called homeostasis. Effective communication was the dimension of family life that helped to establish this balance.

The research on leisure and family satisfaction is relatively new. Zabriskie and McCormick's (2003) study was one of the first attempts to address the issue of family satisfaction from the perspective of different family members. In their research project Zabriskie and McCormick tested The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning from the perspective of the marital dyad, their adolescent children, and family as a unit. The findings of their study showed that family leisure activities were related to satisfaction with family life for parents and for the family as a whole; however, only core leisure activities were associated with children's satisfaction with family life. Zabriskie and McCormick explained this difference via a more holistic evaluation of family leisure by parents, as well as the children's developmental stage during which closeness, stability and a sense of belonging to family were especially important. The authors suggested that such needs could be satisfied by core leisure activities undertaken in the context of the family. Another interesting finding of Zabriskie and McCormick's study was related to gender difference in the level of satisfaction with family life and family leisure participation that was found among children but not among parents. According to the authors, daughters reported a lower level of satisfaction with family life and a lower level of family leisure participation than sons. Zabriskie and McCormick explained this finding by different developmental processes that female and male adolescents go through. Due to a larger decrease in confidence and a drop in self-esteem during puberty among girls they may be more

prone than boys to develop depression and eating disorders. A history of divorce was another strong predictor of lower family satisfaction in Zabriskie and McCormick's study.

Agate et al.'s (2009) study confirmed the importance of leisure satisfaction for satisfaction with family life. According to their research, satisfaction with both core and balance leisure activities had a greater effect on satisfaction with family life than any other variables, including family income, marital status, age, history of divorce, and family leisure involvement. For adolescent youth; however, both the amount of time spent in family leisure and satisfaction with family leisure were important factors influencing family satisfaction. Another important finding of Agate et al.'s study was the greater importance of core rather than balance leisure activities from the perspective of parents, children, and family as a unit. In fact, "core family leisure satisfaction was the single greatest predictor of satisfaction with family life and explained up to twice as much variance as balance family leisure satisfaction" (p. 219).

Zabriskie and his colleagues also applied the core and balance model of family leisure functioning to different non-traditional family types: adoptive (Zabriskie & Freeman, 2004) and single-parent families (Hornberger et al., 2010), families with members who have a disability (Dodd et al., 2009) and ethnic minority families (Christenson et al., 2006). As a result of this extensive work, Poff et al. (2010) developed a framework that modeled relationships between different dimensions of family life, specifically, family leisure participation, family functioning, family communication, family leisure satisfaction, and satisfaction with family life. The authors found that family leisure involvement directly or indirectly (through communication) influenced family functioning. The level of leisure involvement of the family also positively affected

satisfaction of family members with core and balance leisure activities, as well as family functioning. All of these components subsequently positively influenced satisfaction with family life. Interestingly, for adolescent respondents, their level of involvement in family leisure (frequency and duration) was more important in affecting their satisfaction with family life than their satisfaction from the activity.

Besides the line of research informed by The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning, a number of other studies in the leisure field have explored family experiences and leisure (Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2010; Trussell & Shaw, 2007; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). While not focused specifically on family satisfaction, those studies cover a number of closely related concepts and processes that help to better understand the role of leisure in the life of a family. Other aspects of family leisure were discussed in more detail in the previous section of this chapter.

#### **2.4. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

While the definition of technology is very broad and refers to any object made by humans (Murphie & Potts, 2003), in this study I focused on only one subset of technology – *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*. According to the United Nations (2003), ICT, due to its “complex nature and multiple applications” (p. 3) may be seen in a variety of ways. First, ICTs were defined as “the set of activities which facilitate by electronic means the processing, transmission and display of information” (p. 3). ICTs were also viewed as “technologies people use to share, distribute, gather information and to communicate, through computers and

computer networks” (p. 3). Lastly, ICTs were also described as “a complex and varied set of goods, applications and services used for producing, distributing, processing, transforming information – [including] telecoms, TV and radio broadcasting, hardware and software, computer services and electronic media” (p. 3). Since the first definition is mostly focused on specific actions and the third primarily discusses the means of information distribution, I employed the second definition for the purposes of this project. Not only does this definition mention what kinds of devices will be discussed (“computers and computer networks”) but it also explains how these devices are used (“to share, distribute, gather information and to communicate”). Considering the progress in the development of cell phone technologies and the potential of modern cell phones to perform the same actions that originally were only available through computers (connecting to the Internet, creating, sharing, distributing, and gathering of information), I also considered cell phones as an ICT device.

In this section of the Literature Review, I will introduce the reader to the technological environment contemporary families live in and review the multidisciplinary research focused on the use of ICTs and SNSs. Two types of ICT devices that have been used in the context of leisure and are related to the use of SNSs will be discussed in this chapter. First, I will review the main trends in how computers with access to Internet and handheld device (e.g., cell phone) have been used in modern world by families and individual family members. After that I will focus on social network sites (SNSs) by covering the history of their launching and main trends in their use, as well as changes and challenges the creation of SNSs brought into our lives and leisure.

### ***2.4.1. Information and Communication Technology Use in the Modern World***

Constantly increasing use of ICTs has an undisputed effect on the social world and on the individuals within it. According to Smith (2010), 85% of Americans now own a cell phone and 76% own either a desktop or a laptop computer. However, not only technology use affects society, the structure of society and people's personal characteristics (e.g., social class, gender, and age) also influence whether, what kind, and how technology is used. This subsection of the Literature Review will briefly introduce how ICTs are used in American society. It will also describe how people's socio-demographic characteristics (social class, gender and age) influence their use of ICTs.

*Social class.* Social class is one of the important factors that influence the use of modern ICTs. In most developed countries, information and communication technology is widely available and used by many groups of the population. However, there also are some variations in access to and use of ICTs between people of differing levels of education and income. According to the Pew Research Center, parents of 12-17 year olds are more likely to own a computer if they have higher levels of education and incomes (Rankin Macgill, 2007). Moreover, based on the results of a survey conducted among Finnish adolescents, Koivusilta et al. (2007) found that the type of technology and the way it is used are also related to the socio-demographic background of youth, as well as to their education, career and health. According to the findings of this study, adolescents with better health, higher socioeconomic backgrounds, and better prospects for education "often exploited ICT forms that improved their information

utilization skills, whereas entertainment use of ICT accumulated at the opposite end of the spectrum” (p. 100). Koivusilta et al. explained the “digital divide” (p. 96) by the cultural capital provided by well-educated middle-class parents to their children. The authors argued that specific use of ICTs may reinforce social divides in society. For instance, educational use of computers by middle-class youth can improve their information utilization skills and consequently improve their self-confidence. At the same time, even though mobile phones among adolescents of lower socioeconomic status help their parents to maintain distant parenting, they can also be a part of “street-oriented lifestyle” (p. 102), allowing for fast and easy connection with friends, as well as for predominantly entertainment activities (listening to music, chatting).

*Gender.* A number of studies have also pointed out differences in the use of ICTs and in digital literacy among men and women (Kelan, 2007; Sainz et al., 2008; Schumacher & Morahan-Martin, 2001). For example, Lemish and Cohen (2005), Sainz et al., Poynton (2005), and Belt, Richardson, and Webster (2000) discussed differences in digital literacy based on gender and tried to account for factors that led to the gap. Kelan explained that due to the perception that technology is a male domain, it is often avoided by women who sometimes even downplay their level of technical knowledge. Lemish and Cohen argued that men adopt technology earlier and experience greater impact of technology on their lives. Poynton (2005) associated the digital literacy and digital fluency divide with factors such as different access to computers, lack of women-oriented computer games and role models, as well as a lack of social expectations that girls should be technology savvy. Sainz et al., on the other hand, pointed to

some psychosocial constraints on the improvement of digital literacy among women, including the perception of irrelevance of technology, lack of confidence, and negative self-concept. A perception of one's own ability to perform certain computer tasks was found to be lower for women (Saintz, 2006). At the same time, women were found to have higher levels of "computer anxiety" (Brosnan, 1998; King, Bong, & Blandford, 2002). Interestingly, negative self-perception among girls does not always reflect the truth, as girls have been found to often underestimate their abilities to perform computer tasks (Cooper & Weaver, 2003).

Gender was found to have an important effect not only on how confident a person is about his/her technical skills, but also on how and why ICTs are used. Orleans and Laney (2000) found that boys (8 to 17 years of age) were more likely than girls to use or talk about computers and the Internet during their communication with peers. Girls, on contrary, often were using computers for specific purpose and rarely as a topic of conversation with friends. A similar study conducted among adults reported that even women who were employed in ICT-related professions had different attitudes toward technology: while men perceived it as toys and hobbies, women "denied emotional ties" to technology (Kelan, 2007, p. 363) and considered it to be a tool. In relation to cell phones, Lemish and Cohen (2005) found that while men saw cell phones as an extension of themselves, women were rather concerned with phone-calls than the apparatus itself.

A difference in technology proficiency, as well as in the style of its use may put women in a disadvantaged position on the job market. The gender gap in employment in the area of ICTs is already salient and will continue to grow if attitudes in society remain unchanged (Kelan,



2007). Even though in some technology-related areas of the economy, such as call centers, women represent an overwhelming majority, Belt et al. (2000) claimed that this type of work is predominantly “highly routinized, ‘de-skilled’ and de-valued” (p. 366).

*Age.* Age is another factor influencing how different types of information and communication technologies are used. While the use of modern ICTs is steadily increasing among all age groups (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010), teenagers and young adults are still leading in the adoption of technological innovations (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). For example, according to the Pew Research Center report, 93% of teens ages 12-17 and 93% of young adults ages 18-29 go online. However, among all adults who are 18 years of age and older only about 74% go online (Taylor & Keeter). The generation of so called Millennials (age 18-29) are also “more likely to have their own social networking profiles, to connect to the internet wirelessly when away from home or work, and to post video of themselves online” (Taylor & Keeter, p. 25). The level of expertise, the type of technology used and the purpose of its use differ between adults and children as well. For example, despite the lack of special training on the part of many children, they are often more confident using computers and perceive themselves to be better experts than many of their parents (Livingstone & Bober, 2005). The activities adolescents and adults usually engage in on-line also vary: while adolescents prefer to use Instant Messenger and play online games (Livingstone & Bober), adults use the Internet for sending or reading emails, using search engines, and researching products or services (Online Activities, 2011). The use of cell phones also differs between parents and their children. For example, Lenhart (2010) found that adolescents send five times more text messages than adults.

Differences in the level of computer proficiency between parents and children may lead to conflict in families. Mesch (2006b) reported that among the main reasons for the Internet-related conflicts between parents and children was a power imbalance due to the higher level of expertise among the adolescents. Interestingly, the opposite situation, when parents were more proficient, could also have unwelcome consequences. Being experienced users, parents claim their share of computer time which provokes competition with their children. Technology use; however, does not always lead to conflict and competition. Horst (2010) reported that many parents see computers and computer games as a positive way to stay involved with their children. Parents believe that involvement in various computer-based activities helps them maintain children's interest in shared time with parents.

Besides social class, gender, and age, personality traits as well as certain characteristics of technology also play a role in how people interact with it (Dabholkar & Bagozzi, 2002; Hsu & Lu, 2004). While conducting this study I kept in mind factors that influence ICT use in families. It was not be feasible; however, to explore them in detail. A separate research project might be needed in order to examine how different characteristics of personality, technology traits and societal beliefs influence the use of ICTs by families.

#### **2.4.2. *ICTs and Family***

New technologies, such as the cell phone and the Internet, influence the way we see and understand communication. Different types of technology, as well as different ways and purposes for using it influence relationships between people in very different ways. For instance, while

cell phones are often praised for connecting people (Nokia ads), irresponsible use of this device may damage relationships and decrease satisfaction from personal interactions. Technology may also provide families with an opportunity to spend time together and share leisure interests through searching information online, communicating with distant relatives or sharing pictures (Horst, 2010). However, it is not always used for the benefit of the family and may often lead to conflict among parents and their children (Mesch, 2006a, 2006b). This sub-section of the Literature Review will present results of the previous studies focused on how certain types of ICTs (specifically, cell phones and computers) are used by individual family members and by families as a whole. In this review, I will describe both positive and negative outcomes of ICTs' use.

*Cell phones.* The use of cell phones was found to have both positive and negative effects on family members, their communication and relationships. The major positive characteristic of cell phones named by participants in Lasen's (2005) study was their potential to increase the safety of children and other members of the family. Safety was also one of the main reasons why parents bought cell phones for their children (Lasen) or insisted on schools allowing their children to use cell phones (Watkins, 2009). Schools, on the other hand, do not always welcome this distraction in classes. For example, due to the possibility of cheating on exams, many teachers and school administrators have opposed the use of cell phones by students on school premises (Donaldson-Evans, 2004, September 23; Ling, 2007). However, as Watkins explained, even zero-tolerance policies established in many schools across the United States do not stop teenagers from sending text messages, listening to music, or taking pictures of their tests

during class. Availability of “anytime anywhere entertainment” associated with access to the Internet, as well as harmful nature of multitasking (Rosen, 2008) creates a very challenging environment in nowadays classrooms due to continuous distraction (Watkins, p. 168). Moreover, even the simple presence of phones and laptops on school premises may increase potential for cyberbullying, sexting and other harmful behaviors (Watkins).

Although they may create problems in schools, many families praise cell phones for the opportunities they provide for teaching adolescents about responsibilities, sharing, and budgeting. For example, parents who participated in Harper and Hamill’s (2005) study reported the ease with which they could initiate discussions with their teenage daughters about paying cell phone bills – a topic difficult to explore when it comes to paying bills for food or other necessities. Cell phones were also praised for helping teenagers to learn how to “manage” relationships (Harper & Hamill). Their ability to start or finish a conversation, to decide when to answer the phone and how to organize potential callers in groups of certain importance were named by participants of Harper and Hamill’s study as important stages in the development of youth.

For the family as a whole, cell phones can be a convenient tool for managing work and leisure (de Vries, 2005) as well as for facilitating family’s everyday activities (e.g., picking up children from school) (Watkins, 2009). While cell phones increase the flexibility for some by providing them an opportunity to change plans at the last minute, they are also blamed for annoyance associated with increased easiness of rearrangement and cancellation of meetings (de Vries). Moreover, cell phones “extend the intimate social sphere at the expense of the public” (p.

44), as well as contribute to blurring the boundaries between office and home, public and private, and work and leisure (Lasen, 2005; Levinson, 2004).

Text messaging is much more popular among youth than among adults (Lenhart, 2010). However, people of all ages report having benefited from this feature. For example, text messaging was praised for helping to diminish conflicts (due to providing time to reduce negative emotions, allowing for the choice of more thoughtful words, and increasing the possibility to speak more openly) (Taylor & Vincent, 2005). Moreover, some couples reported their relationships to be more flirtatious and exciting because of text messaging (due to ability to send a message at times and places that used to be considered inappropriate) (Taylor & Vincent).

Along with blurred boundaries between work and leisure and hectic schedules attributed to frequently changing plans, there are other challenges associated with cell phone use by family members. Among these were unsafe behavior such as sexting and bullying among school age children and texting during driving (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010; Ling, 2007). The development of cliques leading to exclusion of those who are not a part of the group and decreased face-to-face communication with peers and family members were other potential negative consequences of cell phone use (Ling). The ability for teenagers to stay connected with their parents could be considered as both positive and negative effect of cell phone use. While cell phones help children who leave for college or school trips to stay in touch with their parents, the excessive, perpetual communication between children and their parents may lead to delays in the child's development as an independent adult (Lee et al., 2009; Ling).

*Computers and the Internet.* Computers and the Internet are used for different

purposes and may lead to different outcomes. While they might serve as an important educational tool, source of information, and opportunity for shared family leisure time, computers also frequently become a source of conflict in the family. For instance, Mesch (2006b) found that conflict over access to computers and the Internet between adolescents and their parents was quite widespread. In fact, 40% of parents reported having Internet-related conflicts with their children. Among the main reasons for such disagreements were power imbalances in the family related to technological divide between parents and their adolescent children, competition for computer time among siblings, and rules imposed by parents on adolescents' Internet access that could be perceived as restrictions on their autonomy. Interestingly, while children's expertise in technology was found to lead to conflict, in families where parents were experts in on-line technologies conflict was shown to revolve around competition for computer time. Moreover, analyzing data from the Israeli National Youth Survey, Mesch (2006a) found that in families where the Internet was used by teenage children for social purposes rather than for education, the level of inter-generational conflict was higher. The frequency of Internet use by adolescents also negatively affected the amount of time they spent together with the family (Mesch, 2006a). The highest level of conflict was present in families where parents were concerned about the negative effects of the Internet on their children (Mesch, 2006b).

Children's excessive use of a computer and the Internet has been shown to lead to various negative outcomes including poor health and sedentary lifestyles. Along with less physical work and an increase in the choice of inactive forms of leisure, options provided by the Internet (online communication, shopping and many other everyday activities) influence one's need and

willingness to leave home (Albrechtsen, 2001). Such physically inactive lifestyles “created an epidemic of chronic disease outcomes” including heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, colon cancer, anxiety, and depression (Albrechtsen, p. 14). Obesity and excessive weight among children and youth (Kautiainen, Koivusilta, Lintonen, Virtanen, & Rimpela, 2005) were also found to be positively associated with increase in computer use (for e-mail, writing and surfing). Interestingly, this relationship was particularly strong for girls. Some studies have also brought attention to the negative consequences of compulsive Internet use (Morahan-Martin, 2001) or even Internet addiction (Kandell, 1998) among adolescents and young adults.

While excessive use of ICTs and specifically computers has often been associated with negative outcomes, researchers have also stressed its important benefits. For example, Albrechtsen (2001) and Koivusilta et al. (2007) claimed that ICTs can promote healthy and active lifestyles through their “communications power” (Albrechtsen, p. 18). Specifically, according to Lenhart, Madden, and Hitlin (2005), 31% of people who use the Internet search for health information online. With the abundance of information on exercising, healthy eating and healthy lifestyles available online, this information is likely to be used to improve people’s health and well-being.

Academic achievement is also related to the use of ICTs by youth (Jackson et al., 2006; Koivusilta et al., 2007). One of the major reasons why parents make a decision to introduce an Internet connection at home is their belief that the Internet access will facilitate their children’s education and success (Livingstone & Bober, 2005). Many studies support this belief. For example, according to Jackson et al., children from low-income families who used the Internet

had higher grades in school. Rocheleau (1995) also found correlation between computer availability and better test scores in schools. Students with emotional and behavioral disorders who participated in Hopkins' (1991) study reported improvements in self-confidence and self-esteem as well as increased motivation and pace of learning as a result of computer use. Moreover, Koivusilta et al. found that more students who planned to pursue higher education used computers, compared to students who did not plan to continue their educational career. Teachers in schools use technologies in various ways to make learning experience more interactive, interesting, and relevant to technology savvy youth (Watkins, 2009).

ICTs influence various spheres of a person's life, including the relationships and leisure with family members and friends. Lenhart et al. (2005) found that even though adolescents reported spending more time in face-to-face interactions with their friends than they did in social communication facilitated by technology, the amount of communication mediated by telephone, email, IM or text messaging was still very high. The youth in Lenhart et al.'s study reported spending a little more than 10 hours a week personally participating in social activities with their friends and almost 8 hours socializing with them via technology.

Compulsive involvement in cybersex and virtual infidelity are among other potentially damaging outcomes of ICTs use. A "virtual affair" was defined by Young (1999) as a "romantic and/or sexual relationship that is initiated via online contact and maintained predominantly through electronic conversations that occur through e-mail and in virtual communities" (p. 60). Because of the anonymity and thus more open and relaxed online communication, people may feel closer to their online relationships than to their real life partners. The comfort and emotional



intimacy provided by the online partner may lead to cyberaffair and compromise relationships with the spouse (Turkle, 2011; Young, Griffin-Shelley, Cooper, O'Mara, & Buchanan, 2000). While virtual infidelity is sometimes limited to online contacts, it has a potential to transfer into real life. In fact, research shows that 65% of people who were seeking sex via the Internet had sexual encounters with their virtual partner in real life (Rietmeijer, Bull, & McFarlane, 2001). Moreover, even if betrayal happened only in virtual space and was seen by some as not real, for others the effects of cyberinfidelity were as real and as serious as the offline infidelity (Whitty, 2005). Online affairs have been shown to cause the primary partner to feel hurt, betrayed, rejected, lonely, isolated, humiliated, jealous, and angry (Schneider, 2000). The readily available, but often inaccurate, information on the Internet about sexual relationships may be even more dangerous to youth who develop and learn about sexuality and romantic relationships (Bay-Cheng, 2001).

Both cell phones and computers with Internet access are often used to access social network sites (SNSs). In the following subsection I will define SNSs, discuss a short history of the two most popular SNSs (Facebook and MySpace) and describe the main concerns related to the use of these sites.

#### ***2.4.3. Social Network Sites (SNSs)***

Some of the specific technological innovations that are revolutionizing how people spend their leisure time are social network sites. Boyd and Ellison (2008) defined social network sites (SNSs) as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public

profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 211).

*History and current state.* The history of social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, Ning, Tagged and many others (Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites, 2011, July) is still rather short, but their popularity skyrocketed in a very short period of time. First launched in 2003, MySpace experienced 750% increase in the number of users between 2004 and 2005 (Watkins, 2009). Released in 2004, the number of users of Facebook increased 530% during the same period (Watkins) and in 2007 had reached 21 million (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). According to Facebook, there are currently more than 750 million active users of this platform world-wide (Facebook Statistics, 2011). The number of people who use Twitter has also been on the rise and from the year of its inception (2006) till 2010 has gained 180 million users (Yarov, 2010, April 14). In recent years, however, MySpace had lost many of its users and in May of 2011 had 34.9 million subscribers (Lipsman, 2011, June 15). In the following sections I will briefly present the history of the launch and development of the three most popular SNSs in the United States.

Facebook has been described as a “social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers” (Facebook Factsheet, 2011). This social network site (the original name – thefacebook) was launched in February of 2004 (Yadav, 2006, August 26) and was first developed by four of its co-founders – Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, and Eduardo Saverin, all Harvard University students at this time

(Facebook Founder Bio). At first available only to the Harvard University students, in just one month Facebook extended to Columbia and Yale universities (Facebook Timeline, 2011). Very soon it became popular at more than 30,000 other universities, schools and organizations in the U.S. (Yadav). In September of 2006, Facebook (the name and domain were changed in August of 2005) registration was opened to anyone and this SNS is currently widely used by people around the world; in fact 70% of Facebook users are from countries other than the United States (Facebook Statistics, 2011).

The popularity of Facebook is supported by and evident through its continually updated features (Wall, Places, video-chat in collaboration with Skype). The “presence” of Facebook on the news, in classrooms and on websites of various organizations, including libraries, governmental and political organizations (Presidential Debates, ABC News, CNN Live/Facebook integration) is another evidence of Facebook’s popularity. Many of the ICT devices (laptops, cell phones, Ipads) allow people to access Facebook as easy and as fast as possible.

Facebook is undeniably the number one SNS in the United States. However, according to Inside Facebook Gold data service (not a part of Facebook Co.), Facebook lost around 6 million users in the U.S. between April and May of 2011 (Eldon, 2011, June 12). Canada, United Kingdom, Norway and Russia have reported losses of users as well. While the overall number of Facebook users is still on the rise, the majority of the increase comes from developing countries that were late adopters of this SNS (Eldon). Snow (2011, June 20) called this phenomenon “Facebook fatigue” and explained it as the conscious desire of people to decrease the amount of

time spent on Facebook in order to live their real lives in a more meaningful ways: spending time in face-to-face interaction, talking to family members on the phone, studying or participating in other activities they found to be more important. Moreover, according to some of Snow's interviewees, Facebook loses its originality and novelty when the list of "friends" is exhausted. Caution is needed while interpreting these data since they were not supported by Facebook Co. and might represent only temporary trend.

MySpace is another SNS that enjoyed a high level of popularity for approximately six years (Lipsman, 2011, June 15). According to MySpace webpage,

MySpace Inc. is a leading social entertainment destination powered by the passions of fans. Aimed at a Gen Y audience, Myspace drives social interaction by providing a highly personalised experience around entertainment and connecting people to the music, celebrities, TV, movies, and games that they love (MySpace, About Us).

MySpace was created in just 10 days in 2003 by eUniverse whose employees were MySpace's first users. Reaching the peak of its popularity in December 2008, Myspace numbered 75.9 million unique visitors (Infographic, 2011, June 24). However, after a race with Facebook that lasted for several years, MySpace was finally surpassed in 2009. While still holding second place, Myspace is continuously losing its users. According to Lipsman (2011, June 15), during one year, from summer of 2010 till summer of 2011, Myspace lost 50% of its audience, while the average user engagement has dropped 85%. Almost 47% of MySpace's employees were laid off in May of 2011 (Infographic, 2011, June 24).

Twitter, another popular SNS, was created by Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone and Evan Williams in March of 2006 and launched to the general public in July of the same year (Hernandez, 2011,

May 5). In 2007, Twitter became an official company and in 2009 its growth was reported at 1382%, which allowed this SNS to surpass MySpace in the number of unique visitors. After adding various services and adjusting its design, Twitter is still popular among various groups of population in many countries of the world. In March of 2011 it was valued at 7.7 billion dollars (Hernandez). Unique feature of Twitter, that makes it different from Facebook and MySpace, is the user's ability to “tweet” a response to the question “What's happening?” in 140 symbols. Using this micro-blogging system various “elite” (media, celebrities, organizations, and bloggers) and “ordinary” users give other users of Twitter an opportunity to “follow” their lives (Wu, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011).

Initially created for different audiences and with different purposes (MySpace with a focus on music and entertainment and Facebook with a focus on college students' campus life), those sites had common features that made them very attractive to youth. Twitter, launched several years later, did not focus on specific audience but rather aimed to attract various groups of population. All three of them (Facebook, MySpace and Twitter) allowed people to “create and share content, while also providing strong social and community-based features” (Watkins, 2009, p. xi). Thus, they satisfied the needs of youth and adolescents for self-expression and communication with peers. Social network sites also offered them an easy way to learn about the news and events, to express their emotions, and to share their experiences. In fact, for many teenagers and young adults, being a part of an online community became a way of life without which they cannot imagine their world (Watkins). First popularized by the youth for connecting and sharing certain content with friends, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter and other SNSs spread

around the world and currently they are used by people of all ages for work, leisure, social and political activism, learning, shopping and personal expression (Watkins).

Social class, race and age differences in the use of SNSs are quite pronounced. According to SocialBakers data base, in July of 2011 the biggest portion of Facebook users was represented by young adults, people of 18-24 years of age (25%) and those who are 25-34 years old (24%). The middle age adults (35-44 years old) represented 17% of Facebook users, while people who are 45-54 years old represented 13%. Interestingly, older adults (age of 55-64) represented a higher proportion of Facebook users (8%) than teenagers. Only 6% of Facebook users were 16-17 years old and 5% were 13-15 years old. The smallest proportion of users constituted people 65 years of age and older (5% of users) (User age distribution, 2011, July).

The users of MySpace tend to be much younger. Around 33% of its users are 17 years old and younger, while 20% are 45-54 years of age. Middle age adults (35-44 years of age) represent around 17% of MySpace users, followed by those who are 25-34 years of age (12%). Young adults (18-24 years old) represent only around 10%, while older adults constitute the smallest group of users. People 55-64 years of age – 7% and 65 years of age and older – about 2% (Age distribution on social network sites, 2010). Median age of Twitter users is 31 years old (Morgan, 2009, March 5).

While the use of SNSs by older adults seems to be rather low, SNSs are no longer only a trend for the young – more and more people of different ages are using the opportunity to stay connected. The recent findings of Pew Research Center provide some evidence of this trend. During just one year, from April of 2009 to May of 2010, engagement in social networking

among users who are 50 years of age and older almost doubled: 50-64 years old Internet users who reported use of MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn grew 88%, while those who are 65 years old and above – grew 100% (Madden, 2010). Unlike younger users of SNSs, older adults continue using e-mail for communication, but SNSs are added to the online activities of more and more people in the 50+ age category (Madden).

Conducting research among youth, Watkins (2009) found MySpace to be predominantly popular among high school students, ethnic and racial minorities, and youth without higher education. It focuses on entertainment and provides adolescents and young adults with opportunity to create individual page with a personalized design, music, and a chance to express one's creativity. At the same time, Facebook, with its more classic and uniform design, was initially restricted only to people with higher education (e-mails with .edu extension) and also had very specific group of users – predominantly Caucasian and educated young adults. In fact, soon after Facebook was launched it became almost a rule in various colleges across the United States for all incoming students to create an account. Without it, students reported feeling isolated and disconnected from the campus community (Watkins). Twitter, on the other hand, provided opportunity for variety of individuals and organizations to publicize their actions which made it attractive to users of various age.

Life stage also seems to be related to the likelihood of an individual subscribing to a specific social network site. While initially many high school students joined MySpace, which often was considered as fitting the rebellious nature of teen years, going to college (among those who do so) meant not only change in real life social environment but also change in social

network online community. The majority of students in Watkins' (2009) study reported switching to Facebook as a way to connect to their college peers and even highlight their new higher social status as students. They also acknowledged that when they graduate they will have to "clean" their Facebook account or even completely switch to LinkedIn, which was considered more professional and appropriate for the goals of young professionals (Ellison et al., 2007).

Considering that users of Twitter are the oldest among users of three SNSs – Facebook, MySpace and Twitter – (Morgan, 2009, March 5), the majority of people start using it in their adulthood (median age of Twitter users is 31 years old).

*Changes and challenges brought by the use of SNSs.* Widely popular among people of different ages, genders, and races, social network sites may have both positive and negative outcomes for individual family members, as well as for the family as a unit. While providing an easy and fast way of communication between relatives who are separated by distance, many authors have argued that SNSs may also lead to conflict and disagreements between spouses, as well as parents and their children. They may also compromise the health of adults and healthy development of youth, putting at risk their personal identities and the unity of the family as a whole (boyd & Ellison, 2008, Rietmeijer et al., 2001; Whitty, 2005).

Among the most often discussed positive outcomes of SNSs was the connection afforded to family members separated by geographical distance. SNSs provide extended and transnational families, as well as relocated spouses, an opportunity to stay in touch, to share pictures and to have online conversations with the use of web-cameras. These types of activities are especially valued by families for their ability to mitigate time and space distance (Horst, 2010).



While providing an opportunity for maintaining contact with those who are separated by distance, SNSs may also lead to changes in interaction between people who have the alternative to communicate face-to-face. The consequences of substituting face-to-face with online interaction were discussed by Turkle (2011). She explained that the ability to simultaneously communicate with several people afforded by the Internet may decrease our feeling of connection. Moreover, we cannot even be sure whether we have the relationships (romantic, friendship, etc.) with the real personality of the individual or the personality he/she carefully delivers through the well-crafted and thought-through messages. Turkle also discussed that while using the Internet to communicate with people creates an impression of being connected, our expectations toward our friends and relatives decrease. We call only closest circle of people since the phone call is often perceived as intrusive and even demanding. According to Turkle, those who are not included in the closest circle we treat more like an item on a check-list: we need to mark them off by answering their messages/e-mails. Even communication through e-mails and messages has changed; the ever increasing speed of life and the expectation of almost immediate response make us ask shorter questions, not requiring too much time and thought processing to respond. Not only does such interaction not account for friends' "unscheduled needs" (p. 188), it makes our communication shallower. Low levels of commitment and controlled relationships become a norm of modern life.

Another potential problem associated with the use of SNSs is addiction (Watkins, 2009). Many of the teens interviewed in Watkins' study described their experiences with Facebook and MySpace using words such as "addictive" and "hard to resist" (p. 133). Griffiths (2001)

discussed the negative symptoms of what some researchers call nonchemical (behavioral) addiction including mood modification, negative effect on people's life, social withdrawal and isolation, and conflict with people around them. Despite those symptoms, Watkins was rather skeptical about classifying the use of SNSs as addiction. He claimed it to be more of a habitual activity and in support of his thesis provided examples of similar discourses related to gaming. As Watkins stated, American Psychiatric Association (APA) decided not to include video games addiction in the DSM-IV. While there might be not enough research to classify the use of SNSs as addiction, the concern about excessive use of those websites is not without merit. According to Parr (2010, February 16), "the average U.S. Internet user spends more time on Facebook than on Google, Yahoo, YouTube, Microsoft, Wikipedia and Amazon combined." In January of 2010, an average Facebook user in the U.S. spent more than seven hours per month on Facebook, or more than 14 minutes per day. An even more shocking statistic was presented by Oxygen Media and Lightspeed Research (as cited by Parr, 2010, July 7). According to these findings, almost 39% of young women age 18-34 reported to be Facebook addicts. More than a third said they check their Facebook even before they go to the bathroom when they wake up, while 21% check Facebook in the middle of the night. More than half of the surveyed women (57%) reported talking to people online more than talking to them face-to-face.

While the amount of time young people spend on SNSs can be a cause of concern, it is also important to know what exactly they do while on-line. Conducting research among young people (18-34 years old), Oxygen Media and Lightspeed Research (as cited in Parr, 2010, July 7) found that many (49%) young women thought it was appropriate to "keep tabs on a boyfriend by

having access to his accounts,” while 42% of men believed the same way. The majority of women (58%) also thought it was ok to keep tabs on “frenemies” (i.e., a rival with which one maintains friendly relations). Besides following other people’s accounts, SNSs provide opportunities for youth to shape their own identity. While parents and schools still play important roles in socialization of children, the Internet and SNSs provide additional channels through which peer groups can influence lives of young people. Social network sites help adolescents to “try on” different identities (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Russell & Holmes, 1996; Watkins, 2009), rather than conform to those assigned to them by such institutions as family and school. However, they also put them in danger of making risky decisions and being hurt. Presenting themselves in certain pictures, providing information about music and movies they like, posting about events in their lives, emotions and thoughts, adolescents present an image of the person they would like to be (Turkle, 2011; Watkins, 2009). The response from their online community may either increase or damage their self-esteem.

A serious problem associated with the use of the Internet in general and SNSs specifically is cyber-bullying. According to The National Crime Prevention Council, cyber-bullying is “the process of using the Internet, cell phones or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person” (Cyber bullying law & legal definition, n.d.). While more teens who use the Internet report being bullied offline (68%) than online (32%), the relatively new trend of cyber-bullying cannot be ignored (Lenhart, 2007). As Stutzky (2006) claimed, the outcomes of cyber-bullying may be more serious than the consequences of more traditional personal bullying. Cyber-bullying is experienced differently since online harassment is not

limited to the specific time or space and thus, even at home child does not feel safe. Moreover, cyber-bullying increases the number of people who witness one's humiliation, and extends the duration of humiliation (it is hard to "delete" anything if it was available online even for a short period of time) and cruelty (the bully does not see what effect the harassment might have had on the person).

Cyber-bullying is not restricted to SNSs, but according to Lenhart (2007), teens who use social networks are more likely to report receiving threatening aggressive messages. Lenhart study showed that users of SNSs were also more likely to report that someone spread rumors about them, posted some embarrassing picture of them without consent or forwarded some personal information/ discussion/ IM. Moreover, girls reported experiencing cyber-bullying more often than boys – 38% and 26%, respectively, with older girls (15-17 years of age) being the most bullied group (Lenhart). LGBT youth are also among the most targeted groups for cyber-bullying. As Blumenfeld and Cooper (2010) found, 54% of LGBT youth who participated in the study were victims of cyber-bullying within the past three months. Among reasons for cyber-bullying Lenhart named adolescents' cruelty and intolerance, as well as opportunities provided by technology: ease of information manipulation (easy to change parts of the text, Photoshop) and false perception of lack of consequences due to mediated communication.

Privacy control and revealing personal information online are among the most salient concerns related to the use of social network sites (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Stutzman, 2006). Parents, schools and media express continuing concerns about privacy and safety of youth who use SNSs (Lenhart & Madden). Comparing requests for identity

disclosure between three social network sites (Facebook, MySpace, and Friendster) and FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)—compliant student directory service at the University of North Carolina, Stutzman found that official organizations ask for much less personal information about the students than social network sites do. With more and more young children creating their own profiles on SNSs the need to consider issues of identity theft, stalking or predators becomes even more critical (Richtel & Helft, 2011). According to The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (2000), in order to collect online personal information from children under 13 “a Web site operator must seek verifiable consent from a parent” as well as “protect children’s privacy and safety online” (COPPA, 2000). As a result, the majority of SNSs do not allow children younger than 13 years old to create a profile. However, many children do, often with the help from their parents who either do not know about this rule, do not consider it to be important, or are afraid that children will create a profile without their knowledge (Richtel & Helft).

Some comfort is brought by the findings that users of Facebook are “searching” for people they have met in real life much more often than trying to “browse” for random strangers to communicate (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006; Pempek et al., 2009). The prevailing majority of teens who are engaged in SNSs (91%) reported using those sites to stay in touch with people they know personally (Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Watkins, 2009). However, there are still many adolescents (49%) who use the SNSs to make new friends (Lenhart & Madden). Not only do social-networking youth are contacted by complete strangers (43% reported having such experience) but they also accept “friendship” requests from people they have never met before

(31% have done so) (Lenhart & Madden). According to Oxygen Media and Lightspeed Research, 54% of 18-24 year old women said they did not trust Facebook with their private information, but 50% of women reported they did not see anything wrong with being Facebook “friends” with complete strangers (as cited by Parr, 2010, July 7). Thus, we could assume that while youth accepts “friendship” requests of strangers, they also are aware of dangers and the need to protect their privacy.

Unfortunately, the report by Lenhart and Madden (2007) does not support such optimistic expectation. Their findings showed that many adolescents reveal a great deal of personal information on their SNSs profiles. For example, 85% of teens who had profiles included their first name, 79% posted pictures of themselves and 66% - pictures of their friends. The name of the city or town where teenagers lived was also revealed by the majority of participants (61%) with almost half of the youth (49%) revealing the name of their school. Around 40% of the respondents said they had a link to their blog or included their instant message screen name on their SNSs profile. Almost a third of teens with profiles (29%) revealed their email address or/and last name (Lenhart & Madden). Being aware of dangers associated with revealing too much personal information, the majority of teens tried to maintain a balance: while they were conscious about the amount of information they revealed online they were also relatively open with their friends (Lenhart & Madden). In order to protect themselves from contacts by unwanted strangers teenagers limited access to their profiles in one way or another. For example, 66% of teens who took part in Lenhart and Madden’s project reported their profile to be invisible to all Internet users, except their friends. Many of adolescents who had their profile open to

everyone (46%) reported including at least some (or sometimes a lot) of false information about themselves in order to protect themselves or to be playful (Lenhart & Madden). Although it is a widely discussed issue, the dangers brought by the Internet and SNSs to the lives of young people are not seen the same by everyone. As Lenhart commented in her telephone interview with Goodstein in 2005, the media might exaggerate the harmful potential of online communication and even help to create a “culture of fear” (Goodstein, 2007, p. 38).

Another concern related to the use of SNSs is their impact on individual’s social life. Despite general concerns, Hampton, Sessions, Her, and Rainie (2009) reported that the popularization of the Internet and cell phones did not make Americans more isolated. In fact, the level of social isolation was found to be rather stable since 1985. Exploring people’s strong and weak social ties, Hampton et al. found that “internet use in general and use of social networking services such as Facebook in particular are associated with having a more diverse social network” (p. 3). They claimed that people who are active online are more likely to interact with non-family members and people of different backgrounds. While Hampton et al. did not find any indication that the use of the Internet or cell phones decreases people’s involvement in the community, the use of SNSs in particular was associated with lower level of neighborhood involvement. For example, people who used SNSs were 30% less likely to know at least some of their neighbors, significantly less likely (even than users of the Internet without SNSs profile) to rely on neighbors for family care or as a source of companionship. However, they were as likely as other people to provide companionship to their neighbors (Hampton et al.).

Another study, conducted by Ellison et al. (2007), focused on the development of social

support and social capital through the use of social network sites. According to their study, the use of Facebook among college students led to the development of both bonding and bridging social capital. Moreover, among less frequent Facebook users, lower satisfaction with college life and lower self-esteem were related to lower bridging social capital. Since such a relationship was not found among students who used Facebook more often, Ellison et al. suggested that shy students with lower self-esteem use Facebook to initiate friendships and to develop bridging social capital, which in turn, helps them to increase satisfaction with campus life. In relation to bonding social capital, the authors found that the use of Facebook did not help to develop close relationships; however, it helped to support the existing ones. Along with participation in campus community, Facebook was helping participants of Ellison et al.'s study to maintain old relationships when they moved away from home. Thus, according to the authors, online interactions supported offline relationships rather than hindered them.

In their study on youth with and without online friends, Mesch and Talmud (2006a) found that teenagers who had online friends considered them to be less close than friends with whom they communicated face-to-face. According to the authors, online relationships were considered weaker because of their shorter duration. The duration of relationships was important due to the opportunities it provided for shared experiences, as well as broader variety of shared activities and topics of conversation. Offline relationships that were not restricted to certain topics and activities were perceived to be more holistic, with higher levels of trust and reciprocity. However, a more recent study by Oxygen Media and Lightspeed Research showed changes in the perception of online acquaintances. For example, 50% of surveyed young women believed it



was fine to date people met on Facebook, while 65% of young men thought the same (as cited by Parr, 2010, July 7). Moreover, 20% of young men reported to use their SNSs profiles to “hook up,” while only 6% of young women said they were doing that.

While the use of social network technology influences relationships between people, the people’s interactions also have an effect on how the technology is used. In the study by Mesch and Talmud (2006b), only a small portion of youth reported their online relationships to be important and valuable. While the authors expected that the adolescents who consider their online relationships to be close and important would report to be lonelier, that was not the case. Rather, most of those adolescents reported having conflicting relationships with their parents. Mesch and Talmud explained that these adolescents used online relationships as a source of social support that was not available at home. Their need for social support allowed their online friendships to become more important, strong and intimate.

Development of modern communication technology has led to changes in the dynamics of interaction among people (Hertlein & Webster, 2008), as well as to changes in how personal identities, families, friendships and communities are experienced and perceived. Opportunities provided by modern technologies and the Internet (instant sharing of pictures, immediate and inexpensive video connection, availability of countless online communities and groups) help people not only to maintain relationships with relatives and friends around the world but also to broaden their circle of acquaintances with similar interests and experiences. Russell and Holmes (1996), discussing changes that technologies brought to interpersonal relationships, talked about “extraordinary contradiction in contemporary social life” related to “movement in two directions,

toward the global and the personal” (p. 2). While new technologies often limit face-to-face interactions, they also open the world of cultures, people, and on-line communities.

Modern technology in general, and social network sites in particular, have redefined our perceptions of ourselves, our friendships, our families and communities. We interact differently with people and communities around us, we assign new value to privacy and intimacy, we build relationships with avatars and redefine what partnerships and relationships in real life mean. We spend a lot of time engaging in various activities that involve technology that compete for the attention of those around us. While the effects of technology on identity and community have been widely discussed in the academic literature, little is known about how families, family relationships and leisure influence and are influenced by changes associated with modern technology. This study explored how the use of SNSs influences and is influenced by relationships (specifically, satisfaction with family and marriage) and leisure in family.

The studies discussing family leisure, family and marital satisfaction, as well as the use of SNSs by individuals and their effect on various dimensions of individual’s life are in abundance. However, as was mentioned by Lanigan (2009), while there is some knowledge on how the use of the Internet influences dyadic relationships or relationships between relatives who live apart, a clear understanding of how the use of the Internet influences family members who live in the same household is still lacking. Similarly to the use of the Internet in general, we know very little about how the use of SNSs by family members influences leisure of the family, as well as family members’ satisfaction with family and marital life. Moreover, due to the importance of this topic in the contemporary world, statistical data are collected on a regular basis by various

organizations such as Pew Research Center in order to track the quickly changing trends in the use of technology. However, there are not many studies that would help to explain the relationships between technology and families. In this study I explored various effects that the use of SNSs by family members has on family leisure, as well as on family and marital satisfaction. I also examined whether the opposite influence exists – whether marital and family satisfaction and their satisfaction with couple and family leisure influence the use of SNSs by family members. The following chapter will discuss the theories I used as the basis of this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

“Theorizing is the process of systematically formulating and organizing ideas to understand a particular phenomenon. A theory is the set of interconnected ideas that emerge from this process” (Doherty, Boss, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 1993, p. 20). Researchers from different fields have engaged in theorizing the complex dimensions of family life for many decades. To establish a starting point for this research, I will further discuss two main theories that serve as the sensitizing concepts for this study: symbolic interaction family theory and the Sociotechnological Model. Symbolic interaction family theory helped me to define family and marital and family satisfaction, while the Sociotechnological Model was used to explain interaction between families and SNSs.

#### **3.1. The Symbolic Interaction Family Theory**

Due to the numerous obstacles that researchers face when they study marital satisfaction and satisfaction with family life, specifically the changing nature of satisfaction and subjectivity, I felt that being sensitized to the symbolic interaction family theory was a reasonable starting point. The symbolic interaction family theory is based on symbolic interaction framework and the assumptions of George Herbert Mead (1934) about the nature of the world. According to the symbolic interaction philosophical stance, people create meanings about the world through their interaction with other people and objects. The messages and symbols sent by a person’s environment are processed through the interpretation of his or her mind. As a result, created

meanings inform a person's behavior toward the world around him/her (Blumer, 1969; White & Klein, 2008). According to the symbolic interaction framework, there is no single reality that would be independent from human consciousness; rather there are multiple realities. Each person constructs his or her own meanings in collaboration with his or her environment. Since the closest social environment for many people is their family, in symbolic interaction family theory family is perceived to provide a rich context for construction and verification of meanings among its members, both children and adults. For example, parents socialize their children, passing the language and traditions (White & Klein). Together family members develop views, norms and beliefs specific to their family, as well as some common symbols and meanings (meaningful words, movements, artifacts, places). According to White and Klein, such shared meanings symbolize effective relationships. The opportunity for close interaction that would allow for development of such family philosophy is provided by the shared time and leisure.

The symbolic interaction family theory provides several propositions that might help ground the concept of satisfaction / dissatisfaction in marriage or family. One of the main concepts in the symbolic interaction family framework related to satisfaction is the concept of role – certain rules of behavior, expectations, and performances (White & Klein, 2008). Since members of the family all have their own roles – parents, spouses, children, siblings and many others – the following propositions could explain how their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with marital/family life develops. According to White and Klein, (a) successful performance of a role in the relationship increases a person's satisfaction with this relationship (“we like what we are good at”); (b) clear expectations associated with the role performance lead to increased quality of

performance and thus, increased satisfaction; (c) the perception of agreement on the role performance expectations leads to less *role strain* – stress associated with unsuccessful performance of a role; (d) more contradictory roles that person has to perform lead to decrease in consensus about perceived expectations associated with these roles; (e) high role strain causes difficult adjustment to the role. As a result, the desire to avoid stress may lead to a desire to leave one of the roles which creates a possibility of divorce.

According to these assumptions, one's marital satisfaction is seen as his or her satisfaction with performance of a role of wife/husband, while one's family satisfaction is perceived as individual's satisfaction with his or her performance of a parental/child role. Both marital and family satisfaction would be high if an individual's own understanding of the role conforms to the societal expectations for this role (White & Klein, 2008). They could also decrease if societal expectations are unclear and confusing or are in disagreement with a person's own views on the behavior appropriate to this role. Partaking in several contradictory roles may also create dissatisfaction and stress over poor performance of some or all of those roles (White & Klein). In this study, I used symbolic interaction family theory to explore whether meaning of leisure and technology use (its importance, purpose of having it, need to control it, its effect on marital and family satisfaction) are shared by different family members. I was sensitized to symbolic interaction family theory when discussing family and marital satisfaction. While I did not use perception of personal performance of family roles (spouse, parent, child) as a main factor defining marital and family satisfactions, I took it into consideration in cases when parents or children experience guilt or other emotions over excessive use of SNSs.

### **3.2. Sociotechnological Model**

The *Sociotechnological Model* that served as a lens for this study describes complex relationships between technology and family. This model was introduced by Jane Lanigan in 2009 and represents an attempt to organize existing knowledge on interconnections between family life and technology. It is based on an ecological approach, bidirectional conceptualization, Family System Theory and developmental theory. The Sociotechnological Model provides an analysis of family – technology interaction on various levels: exosystem (social settings in which individual is not involved directly), macrosystem (cultural values, laws, etc.), and chronosystem (history). It also provides an explanation of the complex interplay of factors that influence these relationships: individual traits, technology characteristics, family factors, and extrafamilial influences (Lanigan). I will further discuss the main premises of this model.

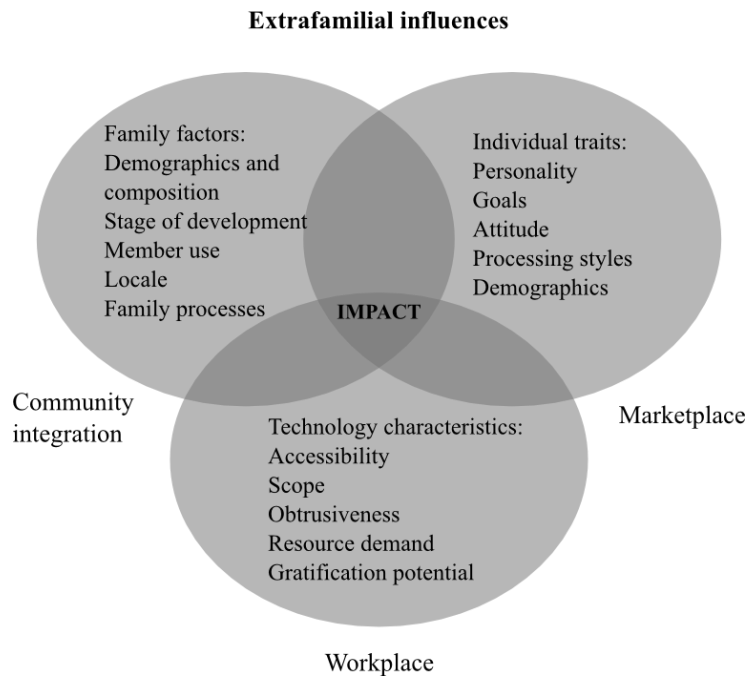


Figure 1. Sociotechnological Model

The model (see Figure 1) depicts interactions between four main factors including individual traits of family members, family factors, technology characteristics and extrafamilial influences (Lanigan, 2009). All of these factors were found to influence family – technology relationships. For example, some *individual traits* of family members that were found to influence the interaction between family and technology were an individual’s personality (extrovert/introvert, self-efficacy), goals and needs, information processing style (verbal or visual), as well as attitudes toward technology.

Besides the individual traits of each family member the *characteristics of the family* as a unit also plays a role in how ICTs influence and are influenced by families. Lanigan (2009) included characteristics such as demographics and composition (size and dispersion) of family,



stage of development (families with children, post-retired families), member use (adoption of ICT by one member leads to adoption by others), locale (urban, suburban, rural), and family processes (cohesion, adaptability and communication).

*Technology characteristics* are another component of the Sociotechnological Model (Lanigan, 2009). The following technology factors were discussed by Lanigan as influential in what technologies are adopted and how they are used: accessibility (user friendly, convenient), scope of the functioning, obtrusiveness, resource demand, and gratification potential (promotes fun, pleasure, status).

There can also be several *extrafamilial influences* that influence the use and adoption of ICTs by families (Lanigan, 2009). They include community integration of ICTs (availability of Internet access, communication via e-mail or listservs, popularity among youth culture), workplace policy about adoption of technology, marketplace (advertising, online services), as well as intensity and direction of the ICT impact on family. The area of overlap between all of these components of the model explains the interaction between family members and technology or bidirectional impact they have on each other in a specific family.

***Family System Theory***      The Sociotechnological Model was built on the premises of *Family System Theory* that will also help to frame my study. Among the main assumptions of the *Family System Theory* are: (a) all parts of the system are interconnected; (b) in order to understand the system we have to study it as a whole; (c) system and environment are interconnected: system influences the environment and environment influences the system; (d)

“system” is not a real thing but rather a way of knowing (White & Klein, p. 156). Based on these premises, the Sociotechnological Model presented the family as a complex system that cannot be understood without taking into consideration a variety of its components that interact with each other. Moreover, as Lanigan (2009) argued, a family does not exist in a vacuum and thus, cannot be examined out of the context of the environment (social, geographical, economic) it is located in. One of the concepts of Family System Theory – boundaries between different family members, as well as between family members and society were also raised by Lanigan. The use of ICTs and the Internet were mentioned as an important factor that leads to change in what families see as appropriate boundaries.

While Family System Theory was often criticized for being too abstract and for being simply a model and not a theory that may elicit prediction (White & Klein, 2008), it has received a lot of attention. Not only was it widely used by practitioners in family counseling, but one of the models based on Family System Theory provided the foundation for research on marital satisfaction in leisure (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). More detailed discussion of this line of research was covered in the section of the Literature Review on leisure and marital satisfaction.

***Developmental Family Theory*** The Sociotechnological Model was also based on *developmental family theory*. The Sociotechnological Model’s assumption about the development of individuals and changes in family life over time, and the consideration of differences in ICT use between families in different life stages are strong evidence of the applicability of the developmental family theory. One of the main premises of the developmental family theory is that over time families go through life cycle stages (Duvall, 1957). However, this main concept

of the developmental theory was also considered to be one of its main weaknesses (Rogers & White, 1993), since the family life cycle may not reflect the experiences of many families. Divorce, lack of children or premature death were all events that were not accounted for in the life cycle stages. Some of the elements of this theory were incorporated into this study by taking into consideration the stage in which participating families are currently in. While all of the families included at least one teenage child, other aspects of family life differed. For example, some families had other younger or older children, parents were of different ages and experiencing different changes in their life (e.g., related to career or health).

Another approach that was used as a basis for the Sociotechnological Model is the *ecological approach* (Lanigan, 2009). In line with the ecological approach, the Sociotechnological Model adopts a holistic perspective that assigns active roles to both family and technology and considers technology and social world interaction to be bidirectional. In other words, not only do technologies and their characteristics have an effect on families but also certain characteristics of families and personal traits of its members influence technology use (Lanigan). I was mindful of the ecological approach while conducting the interviews for this study and I asked questions that were focused not only on the effects SNS technology has on family members and relationships among them, but also on the influence of family members and relationships among them on SNSs use. For example, while a person's use of SNSs might lower his or her marital satisfaction as well as the marital satisfaction of his/her spouse, lower levels of marital satisfaction may increase the use of SNSs.

Using data from The Perceived Impact of Home Computer Use on Family Relationships

study to illustrate an application of the Sociotechnological Model, Lanigan (2009) discussed the difference in ICT use between those families who successfully integrated computers in family life and those who integrated them with less success. She observed that successful families used technology to increase family time by completing errands faster (bill payment, shopping). The respondents from more successful families also reported using computers with other members of the family and did not find differences in Internet usage problematic. Rules about ICTs use were successfully negotiated in these families. On the other hand, families that were less successful in integrating technology reported more conflicted and isolating experiences. In many cases there was a pattern of extreme difference in the amount of time spent using ICTs or expertise between family members. Less successful families found these differences problematic and distancing and struggled to establish rules regarding computer use (Lanigan).

Both symbolic interaction family theory and the Sociotechnological Model provided a sensitizing theoretical basis for this study. While the symbolic interaction family theory helped to define family, and marital and family satisfaction, the Sociotechnological Model provided a framework for analyzing the use of SNSs by family members. Such an interdisciplinary approach helped to ensure a deeper and richer understanding of both of these complex phenomena (marital/family satisfaction and SNS use) and the effects they have on each other.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1. Introduction

Social science research may be conducted in many different ways by applying a variety of methods and worldviews. The way a researcher sees the world, the methodologies that she or he uses to understand it, and the words she or he uses to describe it are shaped by many factors and lived experiences. Such individual worldviews are often called mental models. According to Phillips (1996), a mental model is “a concept that incorporates philosophical strands of scientific paradigms as well as disciplinary theories, life experiences, methodological traditions, values and beliefs” (as cited by Greene, 2007, p. xii). Greene also explained a mental model as a lens through which a researcher sees the world and claimed that it

includes assumptions about the character of the social world we are trying to understand and about the nature of the knowledge we can attain regarding that world, conceptual ideas from disciplines and scientific theories, self-understanding of one’s role as a social scientist in society, life experience and wisdom, value commitments and beliefs (p. xii).

A mental model influences not only how a researcher sees and experiences the world, but also what she or he sees as important and possible to study, as well as how to pursue her or his goals. Is there one “reality” or many? Should we conduct an experiment or invite a story? Is our goal to be distant or involved? These various ways of seeing and understanding the world represent the scholar and her work.

In this chapter I will first discuss my own role as a researcher, discuss the study topic and

its importance and uniqueness. I will then describe the ontological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological foundations of my research and myself as a future scholar. Lastly, I will discuss specific tools and techniques I used for data collection and analysis, including reasons for the choice of these methods, as well as potential issues I could have faced.

#### **4.2. Role of the Researcher**

My own mental model is influenced by my personal characteristics as an individual, my socio-demographic and cultural background, and my previous life experiences. As a relatively young female graduate student who has a liberal family background and the experience of living and studying in two different countries, I tend to see the world as having no single reality. My views of the world and the ways of knowing it would be best described by the terms idealism, constructionism, and interpretivism (symbolic interactionism). To me, the social world is diverse and in order to understand it one should be an attentive listener and a careful observer. The messages we constantly send to and receive from others are important building blocks of our realities. My ontological and epistemological stances, as well as my theoretical perspectives, affect the methodology I use for conducting research. My choice of the qualitative method approach can be explained by my desire to conduct research that would lead to changes that are meaningful and useful for the participants. I also believe that use of qualitative data offers the best opportunity for developing a rich understanding of complex relationships and lived experiences.

Since I believe that being completely unbiased is an unattainable goal for researchers, I

strive to stay conscious of the influences my own beliefs and experiences have on the research process. I realize that as a person who comes from a different country and who has no children of her own I was an outsider to the participants in my study. However, many of them associated with me as with someone who, similarly to them, comes from a family with a rather traditional structure – two parents-two children. Moreover, higher level of education and middle class status of most of my participants also helped me to develop rapport with them. Having some preconceptions of how a family of this type may work as a unit, I tried to stay conscious of this bias to avoid any assumptions.

The goal of my research was to understand and reflect on the experiences of the participants, as well as to address issues specific to their lives. My choice of methodology reflected my philosophy of research as an active process with my primary responsibility being that of an active listener who works with participants in the construction of meaningful and appropriate theoretical understandings of lived experiences. As a result, the specific tools for data collection I employed were family interviews and individual interviews<sup>1</sup>. These tools provided my participants with an opportunity for interaction and self-expression.

#### **4.3. Ontological, Epistemological, Theoretical, and Methodological Foundations**

The overarching topic of my project was *Family and marital satisfaction and the use of social network sites (SNSs)*. Two specific research questions I explored were: how the use of social network sites by parents and/or children (as a leisure activity) influences and is influenced

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1 My initial plan also included employing narrative diaries but due to problems with recruitment of families I had to forego this data collection method. Additional information will be provided in the section on Limitations of the Study in the Conclusions.

by family satisfaction, as well as how spousal use of social network sites (as a leisure activity) influences and is influenced by marital satisfaction. In both of these cases satisfaction with leisure (spousal or family) served as a mediator between the use of SNSs for leisure purposes and satisfaction with marriage/family.

In order to understand a study and to judge its quality one should know the ontological and epistemological stands of the researcher. The sensitizing theoretical framework and methodology that she or he uses may inform the readers about the researcher's set of beliefs and aspirations for conducting research.

*Ontology* is defined as "beliefs about what there is to know about the world" (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 11). There are several ontological positions that present very different views on how one might know the world. For example, followers of *realism* argue that regardless of consciousness and views and interpretations of human beings, there exists an independent world with fixed characteristics (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010; Snape & Spencer). According to *materialism*, the real world consists of only material objects and features, while more abstract concepts, such as values and beliefs exist separately and do not shape the material world (Snape & Spencer). Finally, *idealism* argues that there is no independent reality, and that the world and experiences are always interpreted through our mind (Schwandt, 2001; Snape & Spencer). While the followers of idealism do not reject the existence of a natural or social world they believe that there is no direct access to this world, other than through the mind's interpretation (Schwandt; Snape & Spencer). Since there is no single reality, human behavior cannot be explained in "cause and effect" terms: while people create rules for social action these rules are often interpreted



differently by different people (May, 2001). There are two positions adopted by the followers of idealism: some of them believe that our interpretations of the world may be combined in certain collective meanings, while others (*relativists*) do not accept the existence of a single reality and perceive the world as a set of “social constructions” (Snape & Spencer) and “ideas” (Crotty, 1998). Considering that human beings are social beings who live and function in groups and interact with each other, I believe that over time we develop collective meanings. Such a set of norms and beliefs may work for one group of people but be completely irrelevant for a different group. I argue that we often observe such situations between people of different cultures or among groups from different geographic locations.

*Epistemology* discusses the ways of knowing the world. The main differences between epistemological stands focus on beliefs about the existence of “truth” and what can be discovered, views on how the knowledge can be acquired (induction/deduction), and the relationships between the researcher and the researched (distant/involved, objective/subjective) (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Among different epistemological stands are objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism (Crotty, 1998). Because I believe that understandings of lived experiences are constructed through social interactions with others, I will further focus on constructionism.

*Constructionism* is defined as “the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). In contrast with *objectivists*, who believe that there is a

truth, independent of our consciousness that can be discovered with the use of appropriate methods, the constructionists believe that objects in the world around us do not possess an independent meanings. The meanings attached to objects are formed through our lived experiences with them and the shared meanings we have through social interactions with others. We do not simply create these meanings; we construct them through “collaboration” with the objects or people (Crotty). Constructionism is based on the assumption that knowing is an active process during which information is not simply imprinted in our mind but rather processed; we do not simply discover or record the knowledge, but rather construct it (Schwandt, 2001). Thus, the role of the researcher is to be an involved participant with the goal of working with others to more deeply and richly understand the meanings attached to lived experiences. Moreover, according to constructionism, objective research does not exist since all meanings and knowledge are constructed through the process of interpretation by our mind. Constructionism is often associated with qualitative and deductive methods of obtaining and analyzing data.

One of the branches of constructionism, discussed by Crotty (1998), is “*social*” *constructionism*. According to this branch, our reality represents a set of “shared meanings” constructed and reproduced by human beings (p. 54). This socially constructed “system of significant symbols” (traditions, rules, drawings, music) is called culture and has been constructed by generations of people. Thus, we, as human beings, do not have to construct our meanings on a day-to-day basis, but rather we are born into the world of meanings that are provided by and learned from a given culture. According to social constructionism, the culture is our guide without which we could not function: it not only provides us with meanings for objects

but also directs our behavior and even emotions.

A *theoretical perspective*, according to Crotty (1998), is “the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (p. 3). Examples of such theoretical perspectives include positivism, interpretivism, critical theory, feminism and postmodernism. While all of these ways of thinking deserve attention, in order to cover more deeply the perspective that shapes my own research I will mainly focus on interpretivism. To do so I will first cover the history of development of this theoretical perspective and then explain how my own beliefs as a young scholar are aligned with this theoretical framework.

The history of modern science began with Rene Descartes, David Hume, Issac Newton and Francis Bacon. Their groundings of science stressed the importance of objectivity and the strength of direct observations in obtaining knowledge; they built a foundation for the school of positivism (Snape & Spencer, 2003). According to *positivism*, the social world can and should be studied following the same laws and methods that are used to learn about the natural world. One of the founders of this theoretical perspective, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), significantly contributed to the popularization of the term positivism (Crotty, 1998; Snape & Spencer). There are certain characteristics that are associated with positivist stance: belief in the appropriateness of natural science methods for social research, acceptance of observation as the only valid method of data collection, inductive nature of facts’ accumulation, the need for empirical testing of hypotheses, and distinction between facts and values (Snape & Spencer).

In 1781, Immanuel Kant published his revolutionary *The Critique of Pure Reason* in

which he proposed that there exist other ways of knowing. Along with Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Weber, Kant is considered to be the founder of *interpretivism* or *humanism*, a school of thought that claims “truth is not absolute but is decided by human judgment” (Bernard, 2000, p. 18). The followers of this approach stressed “the importance of interpretation as well as observation in understanding the social world” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 7). Dividing sciences into two kinds – natural and human sciences, Wilhelm Dilthey claimed that they cannot be understood using the same methods (Bernard; Crotty, 1998). His suggestion was to conduct social science research by understanding “lived experiences” of people (Snape & Spencer) and by looking at “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, p. 67).

According to Kant, not only are our senses (for example, sight) important for perceiving the world, but so also are our interpretations of what we gain from these senses. He claimed that our understandings of the world are not only influenced by our experiences, but also by our thoughts and ideas about those experiences (Snape & Spencer). Because of its focus on subjective interpretation, this school of thought is often (yet not without exceptions) associated with qualitative research (Crotty). Max Weber also supported the idea that the analysis of material conditions and direct observation are insufficient methods for fully understanding social phenomena (Snape & Spencer). The relationships between the researcher-interpretivist and the participants of the study became more collaborative and were reflected in a variety of research designs from action research to ethnography (Snape & Spencer).

Various theoretical positions, including symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, later branched away from interpretivism (Crotty, 1998). Because I believe that

humans interact primarily through an understanding of shared symbols, I will mainly focus on symbolic interactionism. According to *symbolic interactionism*, each individual creates his or her own “meaningful existence and a sense of ‘self’ from the social milieu in which s/he lives” (Wearing, 1998, p. 39). By interpreting personal experiences and the actions of others, the individual assigns meanings to the social interactions and the world around her or him.

George Herbert Mead and his student Herbert Blumer were among the main founders of symbolic interactionism and the Chicago School of thought (Crotty, 1998; Layder, 1993; Schwandt, 1994). The Chicago School approached social research from the humanistic point of view (Layder). According to George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, symbolic interactionism postulates certain beliefs: (a) the behavior of the individual towards people and objects is based on the meaning that these people and objects have for him/her; (b) the meanings people assign to certain people or things are created during interaction (communication) through the use of language and other symbols; (c) these meanings are created and changed through the process of interpretation (Schwandt). In other words, according to Mead, an individual, influenced by social messages transmitted through language, role taking, and social interaction filters messages through the thinking process of his/her own “Mind” in order to construct his/her own “self” (as cited in Wearing, 1998).

Applied to the field of leisure, symbolic interactionism presents the idea of leisure as a phenomenon that can be defined only by the individual who is experiencing it, as well as by those with whom this experience is shared. The possibility of defining individual meanings of leisure provides an opportunity to challenge or reinforce traditional norms in society (for

example, gender roles) (Wearing, 1998). One of the researchers who looked at leisure through the lens of symbolic interactionism was John Kelly. According to Kelly, leisure represents a fluid and subjective process rather than a fixed structure, activity or time. Leisure is “multidimensional and cannot be characterized by any single or simple element” (Kelly, 1999, p. 66). As was suggested by Kelly, the same activity may have different meanings for different people at different times. Different activities may also have the same meaning for a particular individual. Moreover, one activity may have characteristics of both leisure and non-leisure. Recognizing the power of social constructs such as race or gender, he also saw an individual as an active actor who can influence the construction of his or her identity. Kelly claimed that leisure may play an important role in the process of identity construction (Kelly, 1983).

Among other scholars who have applied the symbolic interactionism approach to studying the concept of leisure were feminist researchers such as Shaw (1992, 1997), Freysinger (1994) and others. Realizing the inappropriateness of some concepts of leisure to women’s experiences, they used symbolic interactionism to redefine family leisure from the perspective of wives and mothers. As a result of such an approach the concept of purposive leisure was developed (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). The line of research that focused on redefining family leisure from the perspective of different family members was discussed in more detail in the Literature Review section.

Because I studied complex lived experiences whose meanings I believe are constructed through symbolic interaction, I chose to employ a qualitative description approach in my study. *Methodology* is “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of

particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). A qualitative description methodology (Sandelowski, 2000) is one of the methodological approaches that present the closest to the reality experiences of the interviewees. The goal of this project was to understand the reality from the perspective of both parents and children in the interviewed families and to provide a comprehensive summary of their views on the use of social network sites and leisure in their families. Thus, I wanted to avoid placing data into previously known frames of the existing theories. Rather I kept my qualitative description as close as possible to the data and the wording used by my participants (Sandelowski). According to Sandelowski, “In qualitative descriptive studies, language is a vehicle of communication” (p. 336) and very little of interpretation by the researcher is required.

To my knowledge, the interplay between family leisure and the use of technology was not previously studied and, thus, exploration of this topic is long overdue. In order to conduct research based on more elaborate qualitative methods (such as grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology) the researcher has to have basic understating of the phenomenon and potential problematic areas for further exploration (McTaggart, 2007). While application of qualitative description is an independent “valuable method by itself” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 335), it may also be used in the future as a fundamental introduction to the topic and could help in the development of a theory through grounded theory studies (Artinian, 1988). As was suggested by Sandelowski, that should not mean that qualitative description is “easier, less valuable, less desirable, or less scientific” than other methods (p. 335). It is simply used to serve a different purpose of introducing a reader to a relatively unexplored topic and presenting data in an almost

untouched form. Unfortunately,

In the now vast qualitative methods literature, there is no comprehensive description of qualitative description as a distinctive method of equal standing with other qualitative methods, although it is one of the most frequently employed methodological approaches in the practice disciplines. (Sandelowski, p. 335).

#### **4.4. Data Collection**

Application of qualitative description approach, based on interpretivism and symbolic interactionism, influenced my choice of specific techniques and data collection tools. A decision about the choice of methods for data collection and analysis is one of the most important parts of every research project. The specific tools chosen by the researcher affect what findings she or he will ultimately obtain. This choice often depends on many factors. In the words of Snape and Spencer (2003):

It is important to recognize that there is no single, accepted way of doing research. Indeed, how researchers carry it out depends upon a range of factors including: their beliefs about the nature of social world and what can be known about it (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (epistemology), the purpose(s) and goals of the research, the characteristic of the research participants, the audience for the research, the funders of the research, and the position and environment of the researchers themselves (p. 1).

I chose to use methodology based on a qualitative description approach because I believed that through studying interactions that help construct shared meanings I can gain a better understanding of the complex social processes I wanted to explore. The specific data collection tools that I used in my dissertation project included family interviews and individual interviews with family members. These tools represent qualitative research methods that value opinions and ideas of the participants and are used to understand the meanings people assign to



certain concepts or phenomena (Snape & Spencer, 2003). In order to analyze the data I used a constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, & Strauss, 1974). In the following sections I will describe in more detail the characteristics of these specific tools I employed in my research and explain the reasons for selecting them. I will also discuss the steps I followed, as well as potential problems a researcher might encounter while using these methods of data collection.

In order to select participants for my research project, I employed a purposive sampling technique, or selected the participants who will help me to understand phenomena (Bernard, 2000). I have used certain criteria to choose participants for my study. Those criteria allowed me to focus on more specific groups of participants for whom I believed the topic of my research was the most relevant and who could provide the most interesting information.

The participants were recruited through an e-week listserve and posts on my personal and my friends' Facebook "Walls," as well as through the listserve of Girls Scout parents and the e-mail list of parents of one middle school in the area. The advertisement (see Appendix 1) included several criteria participants were expected to meet in order to participate in the study: (a) all members of the immediate family<sup>2</sup> have to willingly participate in the study (all family members had to sign individual consent and assent forms) (see Appendixes 3 and 4); (b) the family should include at least one adolescent child (13-17 years of age) who currently lives in the household; (c) at least one child and one parent should have an account on a social network site

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2 Members of the extended family and non-primary caretakers such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, as well as children younger than 13 years of age or children who did not live in the household did not participate in the study.

(Facebook and/or MySpace) which they use on a regular basis (at least once a week). Through the initial screening I ensured that my sample consisted of families who met those requirements by asking potential participants to complete a screening form sent by e-mail (see Appendix 2). The form included background information about the family composition and demographic information, patterns of using social network websites by family members, as well as family's willingness to participate in the study. The form also included information about confidentiality of the collected data. The potential participants were asked to complete the form and return it via e-mail. The family member (usually a mother) self-identified the family's social class, race and ethnicity and other basic demographic information. The initial e-mail from the researcher had also briefly described the project, time commitment required of participants and rules of participation. All participants who agreed to take part in the research project were assigned pseudonyms and were provided with information regarding confidentiality. The participants were rewarded with a \$30 gift certificate per family.

All members of the families participating in the study agreed to take part in both family and individual interviews and none of the participants opposed their interviews to be recorded. The family and individual interviews were conducted in my office or in the families' houses. Interviews with all but one family were conducted on the same day, with family interviews always being conducted before the individual interviews (individual interviews with members of one family were conducted via skype). The strategy to use both family interviews and individual interviews was beneficial for data collection since interaction during the family interviews allowed to uncover several topics that created some disagreement among family members.

Individual interviews provided opportunity to elaborate on these issues as well as on other topics that were not discussed in detail due to their relative sensitivity. While the dynamic of the individual and family interviews was rather healthy and informative – most of the participants have provided their input on the topics and there were no significant arguments or points of contention -- people felt more ready to share information in private. More information on the family and individual interviews will be provided in the following sections of Methods.

#### ***4.4.1. Family interviews***

After completing initial screening (filling out a form), families were invited to take part in family interviews. While the family interviews consisted of a smaller number of participants (3-4) that is usually invited for focus groups (8-12), there were many similarities between family interviews and focus groups process of data collection. *Focus groups* are defined as “an interview style designed for small groups,” “either guided or unguided discussions addressing a particular topic of interest or relevance to the group and the researcher” (Berg, 1995, p. 68). In small group interviews the discussion is focused around certain topics introduced and supported by the moderator (Bernard, 2000; Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). The moderator’s role is to facilitate the communication between participants and to maintain the discussion of the topic of interest by all involved individuals. Focus groups are often used in order to learn about new or not well-researched phenomena and to obtain qualitative, in-depth information that may help to uncover some emic concepts (Stewart et al.).

It is usually not recommended to have heterogeneous participants in the focus group (for

example, people of different ages or genders) since it may affect their openness and lead to certain people dominating the discussion (Bernard, 2000; Stewart et al., 2007). Despite this limitation, small group interviews offer certain advantages when it comes to conducting research on families. One of these advantages is the possibility for direct interaction between family members, which provides an opportunity to react to and build upon each other's responses (Stewart et al.). Seven family interviews with 22 participants were conducted in this study (all the families but one included 3 persons, one family included 4 people since two teenage children participated in the study). Each family interview lasted around 30 minutes and was conducted either at participants' house or at my office. More detailed information about dynamics of each family interview are included in the "Participants and dynamics of data collection" section.

The family interviews helped me understand how family members see the influence of SNSs on family leisure and if families perceive these changes as detrimental/positive/not important. In order to help me understand this effect, participants of each family interview were asked to discuss the following topics (a) *family's and couple's leisure patterns*: the pattern of leisure as a family/ a couple (favorite, enjoyable and other leisure activities); importance assigned to leisure as a family/ as a couple (planned or spontaneous, sacrificed or not); (b) *the use of SNSs in the family*: pattern of SNSs use in the family (differences/similarities in familiarity with and duration of the use of SNSs, shared use of SNS); existence of rules in the family/ a couple about the use of SNSs and the agreement on implementation of these rules; issues related to privacy (whether parents and children agree or disagree on how privacy of their family information should be protected); as well as the existence of any other disagreements on

the use of SNSs between family members that decrease their satisfaction with using SNSs (see Appendix 5). The questions related to satisfaction with leisure experiences, as well as marital and family satisfaction, were only included in the interviews in order to make sure family members could honestly reflect on their feelings.

Attention to all forms of communication is vital to symbolic interactions, so during family interview it is necessary to pay close attention not only to the word choice and verbal expressions of participants but also to non-verbal messages, such as mimics, movements and other representations of human thoughts and emotions (Schwandt, 1994). Thus, while I audio-recorded family interview, I was also paying attention to and taking notes about the most obvious non-verbal cues (expression of anger or satisfaction through facial expressions, sighs, eye rolling, and laughter) that provided me with richer information on the attitudes of family members toward technologies and family leisure. I decided not to video record the family interviews since it could create an additional concern for families when they made a decision to participate in the study.

Although family interviews were likely to add important information to this study, there were also certain issues I needed to address while conducting them. One potential issue was the heterogeneous character of family interview participants (different age and gender), as well as unequal power distribution. Thus, while the interaction among family members has helped me obtain important and interesting information, there was also a risk that I may receive more responses from those family members who are the most outspoken and who play a dominant role in the family. In order to ensure equal representation of views of all family members I asked

participants to take turns and; when needed, directly asked the more quiet family members for their opinions.

Another potential problem I could have faced when conducting family interviews was related to the social desirability effect. I was concerned that some family members (e.g., children or spouses) may not be willing to discuss certain issues that present their family in a negative light. In order to avoid this problem and to ensure that all family members were comfortable sharing their opinions, I assured them that I am genuinely interested in their experiences and reminded them about the anonymity of their identities. I also avoided reacting in any judgmental way in response to their comments.

#### **4.4.2. Individual Interviews**

After I conducted a family interview, every participant was asked to take part in a semi-structured in-depth individual interview. *Interviews* are defined as a conversation with the goal of obtaining information on a certain topic of interest (Berg, 1995). *Semi-structured or semi-standardized interviews* “are located somewhere between the extremes of completely standardized and completely unstandardized interviewing structures” (Berg, p. 33). While providing answers to specific questions the researcher is interested in, they also give respondents an opportunity to disagree or share insights on issues that might be important but were not included in the interview guide (Berg; Bernard, 2000).

Semi-structured interviews are the best choice to collect data in cases when an interviewer does not have many chances to talk to the person. They include questions prepared

by the researcher before the interview process, but may also involve additional topics that emerge during the interview (Bernard, 2000). My own preference regarding this method of data collection can be expressed in the words of Seidman (2006):

(I) Interview because I am interested in other people's stories. Most simply put, stories are a way of knowing. [...] Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness (p. 7).

According to Seidman, the desire to obtain insight about the experiences of other people and meanings they assign to them is the main goal of the interview and should be the main "assumption underlying interviewing technique" (p. 9).

The interviews were conveniently scheduled for the participants either at their residence or in my office. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes with most of the children's interviews being 5-10 minutes shorter than that of their parents. The interviews were conducted individually in order to understand each family member's perspective. A total 22 interviews was conducted – with 14 parents and 8 children (one of the families had 2 children participating in the study). There were 8 children (4 boys and 4 girls) of 13 to 17 years of age participating in the study. Interviews provided participants an opportunity to discuss issues that they did not feel comfortable or were not willing to discuss in a family interview setting (in front of their parents, children, or spouses). For example, during one of the individual interviews a mother revealed that she was checking her son's facebook profile on a regular basis. Some of the children also reported that their parents were underestimating the influence SNSs had on their lives and leisure patterns, a fact they did not share during the family interviews. The participants were asked to

maintain the confidentiality of the interviews and parents were asked to not try to influence the responses of their children in any way.

The interview guide consisted of questions that continued the discussion initiated by family interviews. It was mostly focused on the issues of satisfaction with family/ couple leisure, as well as marital and family satisfaction. More specifically, the interviewees were asked about: (a) *family leisure patterns and patterns of SNSs use*: family leisure activities, amount of time spent on family leisure and on SNSs, number of SNSs profiles and “friends,” the existence of “family” profile and access to profiles of other family members; (b) *satisfaction with leisure*: the most satisfying leisure activities, things that bother them or ways for improving family leisure (its quantity and quality); (c) *effects of SNSs use on family leisure and satisfaction with family leisure*: effect of SNSs use on participation in family leisure (e.g., learning about ideas for family leisure, taking more pictures, spending less time with family), effect of use of SNS by different family members on leisure satisfaction, shared use of SNSs (including examples of specific activities), use of SNSs while spending time with the family / spouse, conscious efforts to exclude SNS from family time; (d) *effects of SNSs use on family and marital satisfaction*: effects of SNSs use by different family members on family satisfaction and marital satisfaction; effect of family satisfaction and marital satisfaction on the use of SNSs (see Appendixes 6 and 7). As part of the interview, participants were also asked to complete the Satisfaction with Family Life Scale (SWFL). Parents completed The Index of Marital Satisfaction.

Since marital and family satisfaction are traditionally evaluated using quantitative tools, I asked the participants to complete two measurement instruments. In order to assess family



satisfaction, Zabriskie and McCormick's (2003) instrument – a modified 5-item *Satisfaction with Family Life Scale* (SWFL) – was used. This instrument was modified by changing the word “life” to “marital life” on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The participants were provided with four statements and asked to indicate how much they agree with each of those statements on a Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree (see Appendixes 6 and 7). The sum of scores for all of the items (ranging from 5 to 35) indicated the level of satisfaction with family life. Marital satisfaction was assessed by asking the parents to answer four questions about marital satisfaction from *The Index of Marital Satisfaction* (see Appendix 6) borrowed from Orthner (1975). The respondents had to choose one out of five potential answers (see Appendix 6) on a Likert-type scale. The scale ranged from 1 for the most negative response (“never” [things are not going well], “seriously” [considered divorce], “decidedly unhappy,” “would not marry at all”) to 5 for the most positive one (“all the time” [things are going well], “have never considered” [divorce], “decidedly happy,” “certainly” [would marry again]). The highest total score (20) indicated the highest level of marital satisfaction and the lowest score (4) indicated the lowest level of marital satisfaction.

The scores received from both Satisfaction with Family Life Scale (SWFL) and The Index of Marital Satisfaction were used to identify cases when family and/or marital satisfaction were especially high or low. The plan was to use this information in the interviews to focus on what specific patterns of SNSs use might have contributed to these families' lower or higher level of family and marital satisfaction.

While an interview is undoubtedly an important and valuable method of obtaining

qualitative data, there are also some limitations associated with this method. The major factor that may have potentially influenced the openness and trust of the participants was the fact that I belong to a different ethnic and age group than participants in my study (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Moreover, my lack of knowledge of youth slang may have created a communication barrier during the interviews with adolescents. In order to overcome these problems I presented myself as a “cordial-but-nonjudgmental” person who is curious and eager to learn about the participants’ culture (Bernad, 2000). I also asked for clarifications if I was not exactly sure what the participants meant by certain words.

Another problem I may have faced during both the individual and family interviews was the fact that I may have unintentionally influenced participants’ responses. According to Stewart et al. (2007), the interviewers and moderators often provide cues that lead respondents to answer questions in a certain way. The “help” of the researcher that shapes the interviewees’ answers was also discussed by Bernard (2000) who called this phenomenon an expectancy effect. The case when participants do not want to offend the interviewer and thus provide her or him with the information they think she or he would like to hear is called the deference effect (Bernard). Finally, the social desirability effect may encourage people to answer questions differently in order to create a good impression (Bernard). In order to overcome problems associated with the deference, expectancy, and social desirability effects and to increase my chances of obtaining honest and open answers from the participants, I tried to avoid conveying my own attitudes and beliefs during the individual and family interviews. In order to create rapport with the interviewees, I started each individual and family interview by assuring the participants that I am

interested in their honest opinions. I also reminded them several times during the individual and family interview that there are no right or wrong answers to any of my questions. To avoid social desirability and deference effects I formed my questions in a non-judgmental and neutral way. Being cautious of the expectancy effect, I also constantly reminded myself that the main purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of others. As was expressed by Seidman (2006), “It [successful interview] requires that we interviewers keep our egos in check” (p. 9).

#### ***4.4.3. Description of Families and the Dynamics of Data Collection***

***Family 1.*** The first (middle class Caucasian) family with twins (a male and a female) of 13 years of age requested the family interview and individual interviews to be conducted in my office on a Saturday morning. I met the family in front of the building and walked them to the office where I explained the goals of conducting the study and the participants' rights. While walking to the office the son used his cell phone to update his status on facebook. After preliminary introduction and signing the letters of consent I began the family interview. The most active participant was the mother who was also the most active user of facebook. At first children were not very enthusiastic about answering the questions but when I specifically asked for their opinions or when they had strong views on something, they shared their thoughts. At some point the father encouraged them to be more vocal by joking “Come on, focus! It's a focus group!” The family seemed to be in a cheerful mood since they were coming back from their children's bowling league and were relaxed in the expectation of the weekend. After the family interview I took each of the family members (one by one) to the rest/lunch area of the building for the

individual interview (to ensure privacy) while the rest of the family stayed in the office browsing the Internet. During individual interviews the pattern of responses was similar to the family interview, with mother being the most willing to share her experiences and provide details, children being a little shy and providing information only when prompted, and father answering questions to the best of his ability.

***Family 2.*** The second family (upper middle class, Caucasian) with two male children of 12 and 16 years of age. They preferred for the family and individual interviews to be conducted in their home. When I arrived, the younger son (who did not take part in the study) was using a computer with his friend in the living room of the house. The mother called the older son and her husband and after a brief introduction and signing the letters of consent I began the family interview. Each member of the family provided fair and equal amount of information. The parents showed a significant amount of respect and trust in their son's opinions and it seemed to make him comfortable expressing his views. The family interview revealed a slight disagreement on the amount of time family spent together, with the mother perceiving or presenting the situation more positively than her husband. The theme of lack of time due to children's involvement in various organized activities was salient during the interview. Family being very busy was also given as the reason for conducting the family and individual interviews at home, in order to cut the time on travel to and from the office. The individual interviews were conducted in the living room with other people (the younger child and his friend) being present (even though they did not seem to pay attention to the conversation). During the individual interview with the son the mother joined her younger child by the computer. Such relative lack of

privacy could have potentially influenced the responses provided by the participants who were answering questions. After his interview was finished, the son left to his room and I conducted the individual interview with his mother (younger child was still playing on the computer). The interview with the father was conducted one-on-one since the mother and the older son left for one of the sport activities and the younger son left to walk a dog with his friend.

**Family 3.** The third family (middle class, Asian + Caucasian) with three children (female – 14, male – 11, female – 9) expressed desire for the family and individual interview to be conducted in their home. Since this family took part in the study during the winter break, all of the family members were at home when I arrived, including two younger children who did not participate in the study. The youngest child was the first to greet me and was immediately ready to talk. However, she was politely asked to leave the dining room where the family interview was about to start. After introducing both parents and the older daughter to the study and their rights as the study participants, I proceeded with questions. All of the family members were actively engaged and willing to share their thoughts and experiences. During the family interview there were no major disagreements, but it was obvious that the father was the most progressive and knowledgeable on issues of information communication technology and SNSs, and he made sure to highlight his powerful status. When the family interview ended I conducted individual interviews with the mother, father and the 14 year old daughter, each of whom provided very interesting and novel information. The privacy was maintained during the interviews with one exception. During the interview with the father the youngest daughter joined him on the couch and, while she looked curious about what was happening, she seemed to

simply enjoy cuddling with her dad. There were no sensitive issues discussed during the child's presence in the room and she was soon asked to leave.

**Family 4.** The fourth family (middle class, Caucasian) who had two sons of 14 and 18 years of age (the younger son participated in the study) preferred to visit me in my office. I met them downstairs and while walking to the office they shared their interest in collegiate sport and the sport participation of both of their sons. In the office the family members were introduced to the goals of the study and explained their rights as participants. The son did not seem to be very excited to be there and was only answering questions when asked directly. The parents, however, seemed to enjoy sharing their opinions and experiences. Responding to her son's lack of enthusiasm, the mother said that he probably did not want to talk in front of the parents and would be more open during the individual interview. However, that did not happen and even during the one-on-one conversation the teenage boy's answers were rather brief. To ensure privacy of the participants the individual interviews were conducted in the lounge area, while the family members were offered to either wait in the office or watch a sporting event in the gym. The family interview helped to reveal some disagreements between the wife and the husband related to the use of facebook.

**Family 5.** The fifth family (working class, Hispanic) had two sons of 11 and 17 years of age with only the older brother participating in the study. I was invited to visit the family in the evening, after the birthday party of the younger son. When I arrived the boy was sitting on the floor of the living room playing with his new toys. I was invited to proceed to the dining room where the family interview and the individual interviews were conducted. The father was

sleeping and had to be woken up, which potentially could have made his participation unpleasant and his answers brief and more negative. The family interview was mainly led by the mother and son who were also the main users of SNSs. The father responded to questions only when asked directly and had a rather negative attitude towards those websites. The individual interviews, however, showed that the father did not have any particular reasons to have such strong opinions about SNSs (excessive use of SNSs by family members), but rather held more traditional beliefs about family and leisure (high level of importance of the family as a group, high level of respect and obedience expected of the children). The individual interviews also revealed some issues family had related to privacy of SNS accounts. During the individual interviews no members of the family but the interviewees were present in the room.

***Family 6.*** The sixth family (working class, Hispanic) had two daughters who were older than 18 and one who was 15 years of age. The youngest daughter took part in the study. The interviews were scheduled to be conducted in the family's house and when I arrived everyone gathered in the dining room. One of the oldest daughters offered me a glass of water and checked if anyone needed anything. Potentially due to cultural expectations of strict power distribution between parents and children the daughters showed a lot of respect to their parents. When the family interview started after preliminary introduction, the participating child was always speaking with respect, in a quiet, calm voice without ever opposing her parents' opinions. While it did not seem that the daughter disagreed with her parents on any of the topics during the family interview and stated that she understood the reasoning behind the rules and expectations regarding the use of technology in the house, during the individual interview she shared that she

did not completely agree with her parents on one of the rules. Due to the scheduling issues with this family, individual interviews had to be conducted via skype the day after the family interview was conducted. However, the connection was stable and the privacy was provided to the interviewees. Thus, there was no reason to believe that such technology-based interaction could have influenced the answers provided by the participants.

*Family 7.* The seventh family (middle class, Caucasian) with two girls of 16 and 14 years of age and an 8 year old boy invited me to visit their house to conduct the family and individual interviews. Only the 14 year old daughter took part in the study. She greeted me by the door and walked me to the living room. The mother, the daughter and I sat down on the couch talking about the study and waiting for the father to arrive from work. When the father arrived and all of the participants signed their letters of consent and were ready for the family interview I started the conversation. Family members took turns and each family interview participant shared approximately equal amount of information. The family interview also provided family members with an opportunity to discuss topics by adding details to each other's comments or trying to remember the exact situation. There was generally high level of respect towards others' opinions and there were no open disagreements on any of the topics. During individual interviews the privacy was provided to each participant.

The patterns of SNSs use reported by participants of the study are presented in Table 1.



**Table 1**  
**The Use of SNSs by Family Members**

	<b>Family member</b>	<b>SNSs used</b>	<b>Number of profiles and “friends”</b>	<b>How often SNSs are used</b>
1.	Mother (Sandra)	Facebook	1 (200-220 friends)	“I use FB constantly. [...]. Not every 5 minutes, every 10 minutes :-) I use it AALLL the time.”
	Father (John)	Facebook	1 (60-70 friends)	“Maybe once a week.”
	Son (Steven)	Facebook (mainly), Twitter	1 (103)	“I never get on Twitter so I use FB all the time,” “6 times a day.”
	Daughter (Alicia)	Facebook (mainly), Twitter	1 (160 friends)	
2.	Mother (Emily)	Facebook	1 (100 friends)	“I log in most days but not for very long.” “Probably 30 min. a week.”
	Father (Oliver)	Google (mainly), Facebook	1 (a little more than 30)	“Every month or so.”
	Son (Eric)	Facebook (Twitter used rarely)	1 (400-430 friends)	“I use fb every day, pretty much every day for maybe like an hour in a couple-minutes chunks. [...] So I use that a fair amount, frequently.”
3.	Mother (Melisa)	Facebook Google+	1 (about 150, between 100 and 200)	“At least once every couple of days, maybe every 2-3 days.”
	Father (Ostin)	Google+ Facebook	1 (about 150 on fb and 100 on g+ and 70 on google+”)	“At least 3 or 4 times a day. I work with computers so it's right up in front of me. ”

Table 1 (cont.)

	<b>Family member</b>	<b>SNSs used</b>	<b>Number of profiles and “friends”</b>	<b>How often SNSs are used</b>
	Daughter (Izabell)	Facebook	1 (about 400)	“I use fb A LOT [...] I check it A LOT per day.”
4.	Mother (Ashley)	Facebook	2 (about 200)	Almost every day [...] 30-40 min a day.
	Father (Robert)	Facebook	“I had people requested but I haven't actually done anything with it. Just probably 30-35 people requested to be friends.”	“I signed up but I don't use it.”
	Son (Kyle)	Facebook	1 (200-300)	5-10 min about twice or three times every week.
5.	Mother (Kathrine)	Facebook	1 (120)	10-20 min every day.
	Father (Jeremy)	Did not use SNSs		
	Son (Dennis)	Facebook	1 (800-900), second created for fun but did not use for 4 months	About 20 times a day.
6.	Mother (Olivia)	Did not use SNSs		
	Father (Sebastian)	Facebook	1 (Does not remember)	Very seldom, about once a month.
	Daughter (Anita)	Facebook	1 (About 700)	“Once per day, [...] sometimes I just leave it open [...] and check it from time to time.”
7.	Mother (Marisa)	Facebook	1 (About 20)	About 10 min. 1-2 times a day (not every day).
	Father (Robert)	Did not use SNSs		
	Daughter (Jackie)	Facebook	1 (About 200)	About 10 min. 1-2 times a day.

#### **4.5. Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis was performed by using constant comparative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), by coding the data or developing the analytic frame (Charmaz, 2006). Through this process of categorization we “construct our codes,” as well as “define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (Charmaz, p. 46). There are several stages that I followed during the process of coding data: initial, focused, axial, and theoretical coding (Charmaz). Each of these stages helped me to improve my understanding of the data. For example, initial coding, which is characterized by speed and spontaneity, helped me to brainstorm new ideas about emerging categories. In this stage, after the initial reading of each interview, I asked questions: “What do the data suggest? From whose points of view?” I constantly reminded myself not to have specific expectations about what data should tell me, but rather I was trying to be open to new ideas and opinions shared by the participants. Using constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I moved fast from the incident to incident in the transcript (Charmaz), I looked for key terms and action words that seemed important to the participants. In this stage, I kept codes rather general and short (“constructed the image of the family,” “agree with the rules”).

In the next stage, focused coding, I used the most salient and frequent codes that made the most analytic sense to screen through the data. By doing so I was trying to make sure that my codes are adequate and that the data were categorized incisively and completely (Charmaz, 2006). This process was not linear since by comparing statements made at different stages of the

interview (beginning and ending), during a family and individual interview, or even made by different people I was able to find clarifications for previously vague or implicit comments. In such cases I had to go back and look at data from different perspectives. For example, while several participants had negative views of SNSs, few of them were articulate about the reasons for such negative beliefs. However, after reading through the transcript of one of the mothers I realized that parents felt protective of their children. The interview revealed that on several occasions the teenagers' feelings were hurt when they posted personal information on-line. As a result it evoked negative feelings or lack of trust toward SNSs on the part of their parents.

During the axial coding, I specified properties and dimensions of categories and subcategories, and combined them in more synthesized and meaningful pieces. Through the process of asking additional questions (“when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences”) the data became overgrown with more detail (Charmaz, 2006). During this stage of data analysis the separate categories were built into a fluent story. Thus, different subcategories emerged and were combined in categories. For example, the category “positive consequences of SNSs use” included several subcategories, such as “obtained new ideas for leisure and improved functioning of their family,” “used to spark a conversation,” “used as a shared interests,” “facilitated communication with distant relatives,” “used to manage organizational issues and stay informed about the whereabouts of other family members.”

During the last stage of coding – theoretical coding – I focused on finding relationships between the developed categories and generation of model. As a result of the last stage of data coding “the analytic story that has coherence” and Circular Model of Interaction between SNS,

Leisure, and Family Satisfaction were created (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). After all categories were well developed and reached a point of theoretical saturation, I considered data collection and model development process to be complete.

#### **4.6. Trustworthiness**

The *trustworthiness*, or quality, of the study is one of the important goals every researcher should strive for. Different researchers use different criteria for evaluating their work. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended judging the trustworthiness of the qualitative study on the basis of four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. While these are widely used criteria for evaluating qualitative studies in general, for this study I used criteria suggested by Charmaz (2006): credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. I will discuss each of these criteria in more detail elaborating on how I ensured that they were met in my research project.

In order to increase *credibility* of the study, Charmaz (2006) suggested ensuring that the researcher is intimately familiar with the topic, that a sufficient amount of data is collected to make conclusions, that systematic comparisons between observations and categories are made, that there are strong logical links between the gathered data and the researcher's arguments, and that an independent assessment confirms the researcher's claims. In order to increase credibility of my study, I first became familiar with the topic of my research, by conducting a review of the literature to become sensitized to issues and questions I could have faced in my interactions with participants. I also personally created and used SNSs profiles in order to better understand the

experiences of my participants. I also followed current news reports related to the topic and was an attentive listener when SNSs were discussed by my students or other people around me.

Second, I tried to increase the study's credibility by staying conscious of the range and depth of my data. Because I collected the data, I was able to control the amount and quality of collected data in order to ensure saturation of the categories and the logical connections between them. In order to avoid premature conclusions, most often due to a lack of time or resources, I obtained an independent opinion of my advisor on both the point of saturation of my categories and the logic of links between them.

Third, I increased the credibility of my study by making systematic comparisons between the data I collected and categories I developed. I strictly followed steps required for systematic and continuous data analysis. I started data analysis as soon as the first set of interviews was collected and continued to analyze new, incoming data immediately after each individual interview or family interview was conducted. Doing that allowed me to analyze data while they were still fresh in my memory (including non-verbal signs).

Fourth, the credibility may be increased by making sure there are strong and direct links between the gathered data and my conclusions. In order to meet this requirement, I sent the interview transcripts and preliminary results to the study participants. By doing this I checked whether my interpretation was relevant to the participants' lived experiences. I also stayed conscious of my own background and set of beliefs in order to represent opinions of my respondents and not my own.

Lastly, to increase the credibility of my study, I provided the possibility for an

independent assessment by audio-recording the individual and family interviews with the participants' permission (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as well as by saving the transcripts of these records pursuant to IRB guidelines. I also asked for an opinion of another researcher to verify the accuracy of my conclusions. Thanks to this verification I obtained several valuable suggestions on how to better highlight the novelty of my findings and how to present my findings in a model.

Another important criterion for evaluating a qualitative data-based study is its *originality* (Charmaz, 2006). In order to evaluate the originality of the study the researcher should pay attention to whether the findings of the study provide new insights on the issue. The researcher should also strive to deliver findings that would “challenge, extend or refine” (p. 182) the existing knowledge of the topic. In order to increase the originality of my study I took a fresh look at the data while analyzing them. I avoided fitting the emerging categories into the findings of previous studies on family leisure and focused instead on the most vivid and important points mentioned by the participants. I also obtained feedback on the categories from both academic and non-academic audiences (parents of children who use SNSs) in order to look at the data from different perspectives. Moreover, the originality of the study was increased by examining the topic of marital and family satisfaction from a novel conceptual standpoint. While most of the studies conducted to date explored leisure and marital and family satisfaction using quantitative approaches, the findings of my study resulted in rich qualitative data.

*Resonance* is another criterion used to evaluate qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006). By resonance Charmaz meant the development of categories that portray the fullness of the studied experience, including marginal and taken-for-granted meanings, as well as deeper insights about

the lives and world of participants. Moreover, the findings of a study with a high level of resonance should be relevant and make sense to the participants. As was mentioned before, individual and family interview transcripts along with the preliminary findings of the study were sent to participants for verification and feedback. The transcripts were sent to participants using either regular mail or e-mail.

Another criterion for evaluating qualitative study mentioned by Charmaz (2006) was *usefulness*. The usefulness of the study might be increased by making sure the results can be applied to the every-day world, contribute to knowledge and society, as well as provide suggestions for practice and further research. To ensure my study is useful and brings some practical solutions to the problem of lower family and marital satisfaction, I have chosen to focus on a topic that is very salient in contemporary society and relevant to the experiences of the majority of people in the United States – the use of social network sites among different members of family. Considering that this topic is relatively new and dynamic there is insufficient information on how the use of SNS technology by family members might influence their satisfaction with leisure, marriage and family.



## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS

#### 5.1. Introduction

The objectives of this study were: 1) to explore how the use of SNSs (as a leisure activity) by family members influences and is influenced by family leisure and family satisfaction; 2) to explore how the use of SNSs (as a leisure activity) by family members influences and is influenced by marital leisure and marital satisfaction; 3) to examine what rules (if any) do families have about the use of SNSs and how those rules influence their marital and family satisfaction. In order to answer these questions I collected a significant amount of qualitative data on which the majority of my study is based, as well as some quantitative data. While the benefit of family and individual interviews is that they provide opportunity for the participants to express their opinions and share their experiences, the benefit of quantitative data is that they allow the researcher to compare experiences of different people using the same standard. Thus, while the majority of the data in this study are presented in a form of a descriptive narrative, I was also trying to ensure that certain concepts were measured quantitatively in order to provide a standard to which all of the participants could be compared. Thus, the parents and children were asked to complete Satisfaction with Family Life Scale (SWFL) (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003) and the parents were asked to complete the Index of Marital Satisfaction Scale (Orthner, 1975). The obtained scores were used to identify cases of extremely low or extremely high family and marital satisfaction or disparities between the satisfaction of spouses or parents and children. In this chapter I will first present the results of the

quantitative data and then described the results obtained from the individual and family interviews.

**Table 2**  
**Families' Satisfaction with Family Life and Marital Satisfaction**

Family / Family member	Satisfaction with family life			Marital satisfaction	
	Wife	Husband	Child	Wife	Husband
Family 1	30	35	Daughter-31 Son-18	17	19
Family 2	30	20	27	19	18
Family 3	34	34	32	17	19
Family 4	33	31	27	18	19
Family 5	32	30	21	18	15
Family 6	27	33	34	18	19
Family 7	30	35	34	18	19

[The minimum possible score for satisfaction with family life was 7, while the maximum possible score was 35. The minimum possible score for marital satisfaction was 4, while the maximum possible score was 20.]

Table 2 presents data obtained with the use of Satisfaction with Family Life Scale (SWFL) and The Index of Marital Satisfaction. There was only one case in which a family member – a husband in Family 1 – obtained a maximum score on SWFL. Interestingly, this participant did not use any of the SNSs, while his wife reported to be a heavy user of SNSs. The high scores reported by this participant might be indicative of his individual personality or of the fact that even in families where some members use SNSs excessively their spouses can display high levels of family satisfaction. None of the participants scored a maximum on the index of marital satisfaction or close to the minimum on either of the scales. The levels of marital satisfaction were quite similar between the husbands and the wives; although in five cases (out of

seven) husbands displayed slightly higher levels of marital satisfaction than their wives. The differences between the scores on family satisfaction scale were somewhat higher – in three cases husbands reported higher levels of satisfaction than their wives, in three cases family satisfaction of wives was higher than their husbands, and in one case the scores were even. Interestingly, in only one case family satisfaction of a child was higher than that of his or her parents. In four cases, children's satisfaction was lower than that of their parents and in three cases children's scores were in between those of the mother and the father. Due to the lack of extremes in SWFL and IMSS scores, the quantitative data were used as an informative component of the study only.

During the individual and family interviews, the participants reflected on various ways in which the use of social network sites by family members influenced leisure of a family or a couple, satisfaction of family members with their family/couple leisure, as well as their satisfaction with family and/or marriage. The majority of the participants used facebook but some of them also had and used Google+ accounts. They logged into their accounts using their personal computers and cell phones. Besides using computers to log into their SNSs profiles, the participants also used computers to check email, play computer games, shop, as well as for study and work (often doing several things simultaneously.)

In confirmation of the sociotechnological model (Lanigan, 2009), individual traits of family members and their families did seem to play a role in how they used SNSs and how they interacted with technology. For example, women in our study reported to be heavier users of SNSs than men, since they were not only communicating with friends but also stayed in touch

with their own relatives and the relatives of their husbands. Ethnic background of families also seemed to influence how technology was integrated into family life. Two Latino families who participated in the study had rather traditional views on family; valued time spent with family and expected children to show proper respect to their parents. In both of these families the husbands had very negative perception of SNSs and preferred to spend time in face-to-face interaction. There were no noticeable differences in how participants used SNSs and integrated technology into their family life based on their socio-economic status.

Most of the families that took part in the study were in similar life stage since all of them had teenage children. However, some of those teens were much younger (age 13) than others (age 17). Moreover, some of the families had pre-teen age children while others did not. Stage of family life had a slight influence on the amount of time spouses were able to spend together without children but did not seem to have an influence on the family leisure or the use of SNSs. Some spouses reported that due to the older age and increased independency of their children they were able to go out for dinner or spend time on other leisure pursuits without children. Interestingly, absence of young children did not guarantee that the spouses would spend leisure time as a couple on a regular basis; however it was almost necessary condition for those who had such leisure opportunities. One family with relatively young child reported that their ability to spend time together as a couple was associated with very flexible work schedule (both of the parents worked from home most of the time).

The use of SNSs by family members or trust parents expressed toward children's ability to manage their social connections on-line were not associated with the age of the children but

rather were influenced by the cultural background, parental style and general mistrust some parents had towards SNSs. More detailed information on how individual traits of the respondents and characteristics of their families influenced family - technology interactions and how SNSs influenced and were influenced by families will be provided in the subsequent sections of the Findings chapter.

The following sections of this chapter will discuss: 1) The influences of the use of social network sites by parents and children (as a leisure activity) on family members' satisfaction with leisure as a family and their family satisfaction; 2) The influences of family satisfaction and satisfaction with family leisure on parents' and children's use of social network sites for leisure; 3) The relationships among spousal use of social network sites (as a leisure activity), spouses' satisfaction with leisure as a couple, and their marital satisfaction; and 4) The rules regarding the use of social network sites by family members and the effects of those rules on family and marital satisfaction.

## **5.2. The Influences of the Use of Social Network Sites by Parents and Children (as a Leisure Activity) on Family Members' Satisfaction with Leisure as a Family and their Family Satisfaction**

Overall, the results with respect to the influences of SNSs on satisfaction with family leisure and family satisfaction were mixed. On the one hand, many participants claimed that the use of social network sites did change the quantity and quality of their family leisure, as well as their satisfaction with family leisure and family in general. There were also others, however, who

said there was no relation between the use of social network sites and leisure and family satisfaction.

### ***5.2.1. Negative Influences of SNS Use on Families, Family Satisfaction and Leisure Satisfaction***

A number of participants [3 wives, 1 husband and 3 teenagers] claimed that the use of social network sites influenced their leisure as a family as well as their satisfaction with family leisure and family in general. Some of the participants were concerned about the influence social network sites had on the development of youth or communication in the family. Participants named problems with development of social skills among children, not spending enough time with the family, or not paying attention during face-to-face interactions with family members as their major concerns. For example, Melisa3 (mother) who described herself as the “least progressive user of technology in her family” reflected on how her husband and children were at times more comfortable with online than face-to-face communication. Melisa3 expressed her concerns about the development of social skills among her children:

Yeah, I might have to drag people from their computers at times [...] the parameters of interacting through social network site are much more limited than the parameters of interacting with a person face-to-face. And I think the less you interact with people face-to-face you lose those skills that are essential. I mean you can always turn off your computer – 'I don't wanna talk to you right now' and shut off your computer but you can't do it to a person in front of you.

While some of the study participants believed that the use of social network sites could be detrimental to the well-being of individual family members, they also saw their negative effects on the family as a whole. One of the concerns expressed by the participants was related to not spending enough time with their family members. Izabell3 (teenage daughter) described her mother's concern about her excessive screen time:

My mom complains that I do too much of video-games, screen-stuff and that I need to get out more, but I hang out with friends a lot too. Usually she just complains about me not spending time with my family 'cause I do facebook and hang out with friends a lot. [...] Well, I do spend more time with them afterwards 'cause sometimes I am a little bit hesitant too, 'cause I don't really like to be forced to have fun with people 'cause then it's not much fun at all.

Izabell3's reluctance to be "forced to have fun" was reflected in her behavior. Her mother – Melisa3 – reported that she tried to invite her daughter to spend time with the relatives but Izabell3 kept returning to her room to use the computer:

I was a little concerned about my daughter this weekend. We had some family over and my daughter spent a lot of time in the computer room chatting with her friends and I kept trying to get her back out here saying "We have people here, you should be interacting with your aunt and our guests" and she would stick around for a few minutes but then she would go back to her room. I was getting a little upset about that.

Izabell 3 admitted that her use of facebook influenced their leisure as a family. She said,

Sometimes – yeah because when they want me to go and do stuff with them I am on

facebook talking to my friends (cause I can relate with my friends more so I like spending time with them too). But yeah, I think facebook kind of interferes with that [time together as a family].

Izabell 3, however, also described that the problem was not limited to her, but that her father's use of social network sites also significantly decreased the amount of time they spent together: “My dad uses them [social network sites] A LOT so sometimes he doesn't spend time with us either.”

Despite her dissatisfaction with the excessive use of facebook or other technology by family members, Melisa3 (mother) did not want to pressure them. She expressed her desire for family members to change their behavior without the need to remind them about the importance of spending time together, yet she also realized that such expectation was not very realistic:

I do get a little upset when some people in my family spend too much time on their own in front of computer and I don't like to see that. I mean I know that some of us need that. I personally don't need that but I do need [...] my quiet time. So, I think that there should be a limit on that [screen time] and sometimes during vacations or holidays when there is no definite schedule to the day people tend to spend a lot of time [online]. So, I would like to limit that time, I'd like for them to realize and admit to themselves without me telling them. It's not gonna happen.

Interestingly, while Melisa3 had concerns about the amount of time her family members spent using SNSs, her scores on family satisfaction, as well as family satisfaction of her husband and children were relatively high, which suggests that disagreements about the amount of SNSs use



do not necessarily have to lower overall family satisfaction. Another mother – Ashley4 – also admitted that facebook “sometimes” took time away from her leisure with the family. As she said,

Sometimes. I think it's because it's easy, not a lot of thought going on, it really is just a relaxation to me, the same thing like sitting in front of tv. They [husband and children] are watching sport for 3 hours on the tv. I will spend 3 hours sitting at the computer. So, it's just completely mindless relaxation for me.

Lack of attention during face-to-face interactions with family members was also mentioned as one of the issues associated with technology use. For example, Ashley4 (mother) discussed how her children and husband reacted to her use of facebook, shopping and online gaming. She said,

I would say sometimes when I spend so much time I can lose track of time on the computer very easily, that sometimes they will come in and say “You've been on for so long” and so I'll leave it and come watch a movie or something. [...] Probably more my husband that would remind me for how long I have been on. But boys, if they want to spend time with me they'll just go downstairs and sit with me at the computer and talk.

While Ashley4 did not see a problem with using computer at the same time as talking to her children, Ashley4's son mentioned that at times he felt his mother was not paying attention to him. Kyle4 (teenage son) said, “She is usually on the computer doing facebook or something else. So, sometimes doesn't really seem like she is listening.” When asked if that bothered him, Kyle4 reported that it did not. However, such response could have been related to the fact that

Kyle4 is a teenage boy for whom expressing his feelings might be influenced by peer pressure and societal norms. His longer response to the question indicated that his mother's spending time on-line did upset him after all. When asked about his reaction to the lack of attention on his mother's side, he said,

I just say "I love you." And then sometimes... like last night we were talking about school and it didn't seem like she was listening so.. [...] Seems like... she is on it [facebook] pretty often and I think... seems like she could take a few moments just to listen.

Another teenage participant (Dennis5) reported very similar experience, explaining that he had to wait for his mother to stop using facebook and pay attention to him:

I think mostly at the nights, when I want to tell her something, she gets on facebook at night and she is so into it like I can't talk to her. And it's usually like 20 minutes and it doesn't affect us but it... makes it longer for me to wait. [...] It doesn't bother me. Just weird – like my mom's on facebook.

While both Dennis5 and Kyle4 stated that their relationships with their mothers were not influenced by their excessive use of SNSs, their responses were indicative of their discomfort with the situation. Dennis5's and Kyle4's family satisfaction scores were also lower than their parents' and lower than other teenage participants' (21 and 27, out of 35, respectively).

Besides decreased amount of family time due to the use of social network sites, participants also believed that their satisfaction with leisure experiences was negatively influenced. In particular, they were dissatisfied when comparing their own leisure to leisure time

of their “friends” on facebook. For example, Dennis5 (teenage son) said,

Usually when I am on facebook I am depressed. I am looking at everything that people are doing and I am like 'aahhh'... But then I talk to them and they are so normal. I think people [are] over doing it on facebook and it makes you feel like “damn! I am not doing much right now.”

Melisa3 (mother) expressed similar sentiments:

Well, I suppose looking at a lot of people updates I want to sort, even subconsciously, be on par possibly. So, when I look at people taking their children to this museum or that educational experience I think “ok, maybe I am not doing my part, maybe I should be taking my kids to these things, drag them away from their computers and make sure they learn all these different things that my friends' children are learning.”

Another mother – Kathrine5 – also shared her thoughts on leisure of other families. She said that when she saw pictures of her friends' family leisure they seemed to enjoy it much more than her own family (especially husband) did:

I know the family from the church and they always go to activities for the older one. He is having football games and everybody is with him and they post pics and they are sharing pictures when they go to camp. But the husband looks like he loves to go. He looks like he is the one... She and him are both ready to go everywhere when they decide.

She later mentioned that due to health issues and personality her husband was never particularly interested in traveling and active leisure, and thus, she often ended up spending leisure time only with her children.

Some [10] participants believed that the use of social network sites did not influence the quantity, quality, or satisfaction with their family leisure and family life, in general. For example, Anita6 (teenage daughter) explained that if one of the family members needed her she would not have a problem to log out of facebook and join her family:

That [being called while using facebook] doesn't happen a lot. It has happened before maybe just because I'll be having conversation with a friend and they [family] will be like "ok, it's time to leave" or "we are gonna start the movie" I will be like "ok, give me a second," when I am done, but it won't happen a lot. So, I wouldn't say that facebook completely affects the amount of time that I spend with my family.

Another participant – John1 (father) – felt similarly and did not believe "[social network site] affects it [family leisure] one way or the other." Both Anita6 and John1 reported rather high levels of family satisfaction (scores of 34 and 35, respectively), which supports their statement about the lack of connection between the use of SNSs and family satisfaction.

Several interviewees [2 wives, 2 teenage boys and 1 teenage girl] reported that while they spent less time together as a family because of social network sites, it did not bother them too much and did not influence their family satisfaction. Answering the question on whether he thought the use of facebook by his mother influenced how much time they spent together as a family, Steven1 (teenage son) said, "Well, yeah, because she is on it constantly. She said every 10 min but it's like every 5, maybe 2 min. She'll take 2 hours bath and then she'll get out and right back on facebook." However, when asked whether such use of facebook by his mother bothered him, Steven1 answered, "It doesn't bother me that much but it lowers time."

Interestingly, his score on the Family Satisfaction Scale was the lowest among all of the participants (18 out of 35) which might indicate that Steven1 was concerned about the lack of attention on the part of his mother. Similarly, Emily2 (mother) while admitting that her son sometimes needed to be reminded to stop using facebook, also did not find that to be a serious problem. She said, “Well... not really... I mean sometimes we have to tell [Son] to get off facebook and come to supper, but not really.” There could be several explanations for such a lack of concern over decrease in family time due to the use of social network sites. Adolescent age of children, perception that technology use was reasonable and inevitable, and the view that social network sites provided necessary relaxation helped family members develop positive attitudes toward SNSs.

Some of the participants said that their family satisfaction was not influenced by the use of social network sites which they saw only as a tool to improve or damage relationships, not the actual *cause* of problems in the family. For example, Melisa3 (mother) explained her daughter's use of facebook by her desire to spend more time with friends due to her age:

Well, I think a part of it is sort of expected because I remember when I was a teenager I didn't have facebook but I do remember feeling that I was a different person from my family and my family doesn't understand me and I need to talk to my friends because they understand me better and I think it's a natural normal process of growing up when you stop looking to the family for your support system and your identity and you look to your friends. So, I think this is just another forum for doing that.

Despite some of the participants' claims that their family leisure was not influenced by the use of

social network sites, the individual and family interviews revealed that they had various concerns related to the use of those sites.

### ***5.2.2. Concerns Related to the SNS Use among the Families***

Some participants were concerned about certain issues related to the use of facebook, even though they did not report that facebook negatively influenced their family leisure or family satisfaction. The participants revealed that members of their families disagreed on matters of privacy of personal profiles, protection of personal information, and the level of social network sites' use that was considered excessive.

For example, Ashley4 (mother) and her husband had a brief conversation during the family interview that revealed their disagreement on the issue of respecting privacy of each other's facebook accounts. While Ashley4 did not mind sharing some information from facebook with her husband and children, she was upset that her husband “looked over her shoulder” while she was accessing the site. Asked about disagreements related to the use of social network sites, she said,

People who look over your shoulder. [...] He [husband] likes to read my facebook every time. [...] Yeah, I'd say that's my disagreement – I don't mind showing some things to him on facebook but I don't like... I guess I think of it as infringement of my privacy when I am on it and he wants to read everything that's on it.

However, Ashley4's family satisfaction score was rather high, suggesting that her concern was not serious enough to influence her relationship with the family members. The issue of privacy

was relevant not only between husbands and wives but also between children and their parents. During another family interview, Dennis<sup>5</sup> (teenage son) and his mother shared their experience of using the same account when Kathrine<sup>5</sup> (mother), who did not have her own account at the time, wanted to play an online game. While playing the game she ended up reading messages Dennis<sup>5</sup>'s friends sent him and even chatted with some of them. Dennis<sup>5</sup> expressed his feelings about such an invasion of privacy:

When I told her [his mother] my email all of my female friends send me a message and it will pop-up in the corner and she reply to her. I used to have a crush on this girl and I was like "MOM!" So, for that point I kind of regret giving her my facebook but we made a deal – every time she do that [chats with her son's friends on facebook] she will have to buy me a new game.

Dennis<sup>5</sup>'s family satisfaction score was relatively low (21 out of 35). However, since his disagreement with his mother about issues of privacy happened in the past, he did not show a great deal of concern.

The issue of privacy and protection of personal information was not the only reason for concern among the families. Some of the participants (especially parents) were also worried about the public nature of SNSs. For example, Olivia<sup>6</sup> (mother) – whose level of family satisfaction was lower than the level of family satisfaction of other participants – believed that the way her daughter managed her public persona influenced their relationship with each other. She said,

It is one of the reasons I don't like facebook. I think facebook is taking your private life

and like put it in the newspaper for everybody to see that. Even though they put some limitations there, it still creates problems, even between friends. [...] Like a telephone game: just say one word and it will end to be a totally different word. And that's what upsets me, I don't think it's a good idea for social communication. And also, with boyfriends... If you see pictures of your ex-boyfriend with somebody else that's really hurt feelings.

The interviews revealed that with few exceptions parents and children agreed on what type of information was appropriate to post on social network sites. However, the quote above reveals that some parents were concerned about their children's feelings being hurt due to the public nature of social network sites.

Another issue that was raised during the interviews was related to the perception of excessive computer use (social network sites, computer games and the internet) -- what some family members found to be acceptable, their spouses and children sometimes found to be excessive. For example, Anita6 (teenage daughter) described how her parents used to get upset with her if they had to repeat their invitation to join them.

For example, I would be on it [facebook] and my mom is calling me to dinner and I'll be like "Ok, I'll be there." But sometimes I'll be having conversation so it will drag out, my mom will get mad at me, she will be like "Ok, come, it's time to eat dinner, get off the facebook and turn off your computer. Come." But I've learned not to do it [keep using facebook when asked to join the family] that much so it doesn't really happen anymore.

However, Anita6's scores on family satisfaction and family satisfaction of her parents were rather



high, revealing the potential ability to work through the issues related to SNSs use.

Not only the teens were blamed for the excessive online conversations; parents were also accused of spending too much time on-line. Ashley<sup>4</sup> (mother) admitted that her computer use made her at times ignore her family members. “Sometimes I will intentionally be involved in what's online if I am in the middle of the game or chatting with someone and they come in I might not stop. I'll just keep doing what I am doing.” When asked whether her family members made comments about her excessive computer time, she responded,

If I've done it for a long time – yeah. [...] Usually more my husband [says something]... but occasionally, [kids]. I can spend a lot of hours doing that. And sometimes they will come in when I spend a lot of time just doing that.

Interestingly, although not by much, family satisfaction scores of both her son and her husband were lower than her own. Overall, social network sites created a variety of issues that caused disagreements in families. The main concerns were related to the privacy of personal profiles, protection of personal information on-line, and the level of social network sites use that could be considered excessive.

### ***5.2.3. Positive Influences of SNS Use on Families, Family Satisfaction and Leisure Satisfaction***

Despite the negative influences of SNSs on family leisure and family satisfaction that many participants reported, there were also positive consequences that some interviewees talked about. Through the use of social network sites family members obtained new ideas for leisure

and how to improve the functioning of their family. SNSs also helped to spark a conversation, provided shared interests between family members, and facilitated communication with distant relatives. Social network sites also helped to manage organizational issues and stay informed about the whereabouts of other family members. For example, Ashley4 (mother) provided examples of social network sites occasionally facilitating her vacation planning with family or finding new activity to do. She said, “We were looking for a vacation home to use with my cousins and one of my friends has posted a place that they have stayed with their extended family and I was able to check out that website and that home.” Ashley4 said that pictures posted on-line have attracted her attention and helped to stir up her interest. Moreover, she revealed that she had another facebook profile that did not provide much personal information and that she did not mind sharing with strangers. She created this profile to share ideas for leisure with the general public and to obtain some ideas from them:

I have another profile but it was... I don't know what you call them... [...] When we go to some places I like to see the unusual things that most people wouldn't be interested in and [...] so I created a site on facebook where people could share the unusual things they had found.

Another mother (Kathrine5) revealed that she had obtained ideas not only related to leisure activities but also about family life in general. She said, “I can see other families. I see they are more functional and I can see how [they] are doing this and I'd say, 'Oh, we need to try to be like them', and sometimes that would help me.” Kathrine5's family satisfaction score supported her statement since it was close to maximum. Kathrine5 also mentioned that she

borrowed ideas about places she would like to visit with her children, such as museums and late night ice-skating.

Many participants also mentioned that sharing pictures or information they saw on facebook could start a conversation with family members. Moreover, besides simply providing topics for conversation, in some families social network sites and other technologies were the only shared interest that helped family members to connect and spend time together. For example, Izabell3 (teenage daughter) commented, “Well, I don't think I can really interact with my dad any other way ‘cause I don't really know what he likes doing besides electronic things.”

In many cases participants reported sharing information about relatives or family friends who lived far away. Thus, social network sites provided families with opportunity to stay in touch with distant relatives and friends. Interestingly, often women were the ones who maintained this connection not only with their own families but also with the relatives of their husbands. For example, Ashley4 (mother) commented that she was the one who kept her husband informed about the events in his relatives' lives:

I frequently do share information. [...] A lot of times pictures or if I found something, like we just found out that the friend of ours was having a baby, so I'll share that information because I use it more and I am friends with a lot of my husband's family. I am able to share information with him about what's going on in his family too.

Emily2 (mother) also discussed how thanks to facebook she communicated with relatives who lived in a different country:

Well, it does help me to keep a little more in touch with our relative in [different

country]. For example, when she came here the summer before last, we traveled together and she is a big picture taker and... so, she put pictures up. And also she'd take pictures of her son and she'll put things there. So, I guess it does affect our ability to communicate and stay in touch.

Similarly, Kathrine<sup>5</sup> (mother) discussed the opportunity provided by facebook to reconnect with her extended family and friends from her home country. She said,

I started a year ago and I really like to use facebook because I could find some friends from the past. Like I was working at [resort town] and I am in touch with them and in touch with family who is in [different country]. He [husband] has an uncle and I thought that he died but he is alive, and some people that I thought died but they never died. And we are in touch, talking about kids and what are they doing.

Such an opportunity to reconnect with people from one's past might be especially important for those who have moved to a different area or to a different country and who have lost contact with their old friends and relatives. While such conclusion seems to be logical, the family satisfaction scores of parents in immigrant families were not much different from other parents. Such lack of discrepancy might be related to the fact that those participants have moved to the U.S. a long time ago and, thus, their connection to the friends in the home country could have waned over time. In general, it was clear from the interviews, while most of the children took the opportunity to connect with friends for granted, their parents felt quite excited about this opportunity provided by the social network sites.

Along with learning information about their relatives and friends, many participants also

used social network sites as one of the tools to update relatives and friends about their lives.

They posted information and pictures about family celebrations and events, sports and activities their children participated in, as well as various everyday activities and happy moments in their lives. In several cases parents reported that they took more pictures during leisure time with the goal of posting them on facebook. As Ashley<sup>4</sup> (mother) shared,

Yeah, I would say I do [take more pictures], not that I always get them posted. But yeah, I think about a little more different things that I want to share and add it to facebook. I tend to do it more because other parents are much better at doing the pictures than I am, so I'll steal pictures from their page to be able to share.

Anita<sup>6</sup> (mother) described a very similar pattern, commenting that she mostly took pictures of significant events in the life of her family:

Sometimes, I think it [taking more pictures] would happen if we are doing something fun or if it's something like routine it would not happen. Like, the times I'll be taking pictures to post them on facebook it'd be probably like birthdays or parties that we have, like holidays like Christmas. But most of the time they won't end up on facebook because I consider family to be more private so it's something... and facebook isn't really that private, so...

Interestingly, Anita<sup>6</sup> was not alone in her belief that some family matters were too private to be posted on social network sites. She also perceived it to be inappropriate to air any negative events in her family life (e.g., disagreements) on facebook and other social network sites. Many other participants supported Anita's view: when they presented their families to public view they

made sure to project a positive image. For example, Melisa3 (mother) explained,

Well, I think I do use facebook as a turf of expression of things that are good about being a mom and being a wife and I post a lot of pictures of happy kids. I think “oh, this will be good to post on facebook,” so I specifically take pictures to post on facebook and they are usually pictures of happy moments with my family. I wouldn't use facebook as a forum for airing disagreements.

The fact that most of the interviewees found it inappropriate to post information about negative events in their family life on facebook raises a question of whether the study participants were just sharing news with their relatives and friends or tried to present their families the way they would like them to be seen. Similarly to providing an opportunity to the individuals to “create” their image through the use of social network sites, facebook and other SNSs gave family members an opportunity to represent their family in a desirable light.

While constructing an online image of their family, participants (especially women) also felt a sense of community with other families with whom they were friends on facebook. The participants stated that they had a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves and felt that being a part of the family was a positive experience. For example, Melisa3 (mother) explained that her family satisfaction was improved thanks to the social network sites' use:

I don't think it [the use of facebook] affects it [family satisfaction] negatively. It may affect it positively in a sense that I see other families, especially during holiday time, posting pictures of everyone smiling, they [are] all together and I think “I am part of this, I also have a family, I also have very loving comfortable home, so it's a good life.”

Melisa3's scores on family satisfaction (34 out of 35) supported her statement that she felt very satisfied with her family. While social network sites clearly provided opportunity for leisure, entertainment and possibly self-representation of the family, they were also often used by family members as a tool to manage organizational issues and to stay informed about the whereabouts of other family members. As Kathrine5 (mother) described her communication with her son: "Sometimes he is in the movies and I send him a message 'What time you want me to pick you up?' or 'which movie are you watching?'" Some parents and teens also reported organizing family-related events by using facebook, including birthday parties and family reunions.

One of the parents also reported using facebook as a tool to learn more about her child. Even though most of the participants claimed to respect privacy of their family members, Kathrine5 (mother) who had a password to her son's facebook account reported to check it regularly (once a week) without his knowledge. She felt that staying informed about her son's feelings allowed her to be more attentive to his needs. In Kathrine5's words:

He was suffering for a girl and sometimes I can see that he is... not too gentle... sometimes he uses words... like he gets mad pretty soon. It's not something really important but sometimes I know more about his feelings or how he is working with his feelings and sometimes as his mom I can help him more.

While no other participants reported accessing their children's or spouse's accounts, many parents mentioned that they added their children as "friends" on facebook. By doing so they tried to stay informed about their children's posts and how they represented themselves on SNSs.

### **5.3. The Influences of Family Satisfaction and Satisfaction with Family Leisure on the Use of Social Network Sites by Family Members**

While the opinions on how the use of social network sites influenced leisure and relationships in families varied, the participants also reported the opposite influence: that the relationships in the family and satisfaction with family life influenced the way family members used social network sites for leisure. These findings also differed for different people. Some participants reported that their family satisfaction and the use of social network sites were not related to each other. There were also others, however, who claimed to use social network sites less during difficult family times in order to avoid publicizing family problems or revealing personal emotions. Conversely, some people claimed to use social network sites more during difficult times to receive social support from close friends.

Among those who reported a decrease in their use of facebook while having a disagreement with family members was Steven1 (teenage son) who said, “If I am upset with someone I don't use facebook ‘cause I don't wanna put something on there that I would regret later.” Another participant, Dennis5 (teenage son) reflected on his pattern of using social network sites at times of family conflict:

I think I would use it less. I don't know, I shut down when I am depressed, I just get away from everything, and just don't get on facebook. [...] I don't wanna people say like 'oohh, emo.' So, I don't really go on facebook when I am upset.

There were also participants who reported to increase the use of social network sites during difficult periods in their family life. They used social network sites as means to distract



themselves and to receive social support. For example, Oliver<sup>2</sup> (father) described his son's pattern of facebook use: "My son might [use facebook more while upset over family matters]. [...] And I've seen him getting mad and going on facebook. I don't think that's a big deal though..." A teenage daughter --Izabell<sup>3</sup>-- also reported receiving social support via personal chat on facebook:

Oh, if I am mad at them [parents] then I will be mad on facebook too. [...] I don't think I would [post public comments], otherwise my dad would start commenting on that and it would be kind of embarrassing. I usually chat with my friends on facebook about it and text and stuff. I don't put it as public or otherwise my parents would see it. [...] It kind of makes me feel better.

Another teen, Anita<sup>6</sup>, said that chatting with friends on facebook helped her distract from negative emotions associated with arguments in the family:

Sometimes, if there is dispute or one of us would be angry at each other, that could possibly lead me to use it [facebook], just to distract myself from that and to get my mind away from any argument that I had or anything. And I won't go and put my status like 'oh, I am mad at my sister or my mom or my dad.' It will be like if one of my closest friends is on maybe I'll start talking to them, not necessarily, I'll just tell them I got into fight with my sister. It just will be like a distraction, I guess.

Interestingly, the youth who reported using facebook to distract themselves or to receive social support also reported higher levels of family satisfaction as compared to the youth who claimed avoiding facebook during family conflicts. Such finding contradicts results of previous

research by Mesch and Talmud (2006b), according to which adolescents who use on-line interaction for social support have more conflictual relationships with their parents. While I did not ask my participants about the presence of conflict in their families, the lower score on family satisfaction could serve as an indicator of some problems in relationships between parents and children.

While many people reported changes in the way they used social network sites during family conflicts, there were also others (around one third of the participants) who said that their family satisfaction did not influence their use of social network sites. For example, John1 (father) answering the question about the use of facebook by his wife and children, reported, “No. And they use it all the time – happy, sad... they use it all the time.” John1's level of family satisfaction was also the highest among all of the participants, suggesting that his view of conflict in his family could be overly optimistic and did not necessarily reflect the way other members of his family felt. When asked whether family relationships (disagreements, happy moments) changed the way he used SNSs, Ostin3 (father said), “We never post about arguments that we might have on facebook, that's just not done. I'd say no again.” Some family members, like Kathrine5, said that they did not use facebook a lot and thus, family relationships did not influence their SNS use patterns.

#### **5.4. The Relationships among Spousal Use of Social Network Sites (as a Leisure Activity), Spouses' Satisfaction with Leisure as a Couple, and their Marital Satisfaction**

The participants did not report examples of the effects of marital satisfaction on the SNS

use. Only examples of the influences of SNSs use on marital leisure and marital satisfaction surfaced in the interviews. Before discussing the relationship between social network sites, marital leisure and marital satisfaction, it is important to note that leisure as a couple was very rare or even nonexistent for many spouses participating in the study. A number of participants reported that most of their leisure involved children. Even when they tried to engage in more marital leisure they either could not find time to do so or felt that they were not used to that anymore and thus it did not feel “natural” to them. For example, one of the study participants – Robert<sup>4</sup> (husband) – described marital leisure in his family:

[Couple leisure does] not seem to be as much... I mean if we are watching the boys' activities I guess we are spending the time there, watching the activities. We try to make special time for that. But I guess it's more we are all together, I guess.

Melisa<sup>3</sup> (mother) also discussed having limited leisure with her spouse and expressed her hopes for the change:

It's [couple leisure] pretty limited. [...] He telecommutes so he is at the house all the time. So, we are pretty much... whenever I am home we are together but we are not actually doing an activity together. So, it's kind of this fuzzy area: I see him all the time but we don't really do the things together or spend much quality time together. But I am hoping that will change.

Similarly to Melisa<sup>3</sup>, several other spouses described the lack of marital leisure and their wish to increase the amount of time they spend as a couple. For example, one of the wives explained that over the years of having children and spending all of their leisure time with them it was hard for

her and her husband to enjoy leisure time on their own. Olivia<sup>6</sup> said,

That's funny. No, we don't spend too much time by ourselves. Sometimes girls are trying to make us go to the movies by ourselves but maybe once a year, maybe for anniversary or something. But we are so used to go with them that even when we go to eat by ourselves we feel weird, we come back home right away.

She later revealed, "I actually would like to spend more time not as a family but more time with my husband. As [daughter] because of her age enjoys more time with her friends than with us, so I think it's time for my husband and I to spend some time together."

Not only women wanted to change the pattern; their husbands also felt the need to spend more time with their wives. However, contrary to their wives, they seemed to not only express their wishes and dreams about spending more time together but also to evaluate the situation in a more practical way. Considering their kids' needs, fathers believed that increase in leisure with their spouses was not achievable at the moment. This was expressed by one of the husbands – Sebastian<sup>6</sup> – who claimed that his and his wife's lives revolved around children and children-related activities:

Since we married, since our first child, we focused on our children and somehow forgot among ourselves to have family and friends, people to go out with socially, and go out as a couple... but no, since we had children it has stopped. We have gone out once, no more than two times in a year. But that's more like an event either from her work or my work. So, we are not alone, we are with other people, socially so to speak.

Sebastian<sup>6</sup> also elaborated on what could change such leisure pattern and what were his

expectations for this change to happen:

Yes, I would like to change this, to spend more time with my wife but I know it's not going to happen until our last child is finished with school. And when I say "finished with school," I understand my child goes to college, she will probably be away from us so we'll see her once, no more than twice a month. And we probably will be able to go out on a date so to speak. To go out anywhere, to the park, to a store, to a mall or to a cafe or go dancing which we both enjoy and like. But that won't happen till several years from now.

Another husband – John1 – also expressed his acceptance of the existing situation: "We don't spend as much time as we used to, but you know, I enjoy going out to dinners to the movies with [my wife]. But, I mean, I enjoy the family activities that we do."

Interestingly, husbands' scores on satisfaction with their marriage were also generally slightly higher than the satisfaction scores among their wives. It may suggest that in cases when lack of couple leisure was accepted by a spouse, he/she experienced less dissatisfaction with his/her marriage as a whole. There were also several spouses who reported having more time together as a couple due to work arrangements or age and gender of their children. For example, Emily2 described the pattern of marital leisure in her family:

You know, the main thing we do is go out to lunch and sometimes we'll go out to hear music or to a play or something like that... pretty much an exception... So, we just realized that since we both work at home we have this luxury of scheduling lunch with each other... so... we probably do that, not often, now, couple of times, 2-3 times a

month.

Emily<sup>2</sup>'s husband – Oliver<sup>2</sup> – also discussed activities he and his wife liked to do together: “You know, if we get an evening without kids we might go out to dinner or we might do something around the house. We used to occasionally just cook dinner together. Not done that in ages.”

Another wife – Ashley<sup>4</sup>—commented,

It hasn't always been that way but now the boys are more bonded with their friends and we do have more time just the two of us together. [...] Watch TV, go out to eat, not so much go to a movie, maybe just go (with all the projects going on) go pick up things for that.

Most of the couple activities reported by the participants were simple and did not require significant funding or planning, yet they provided spouses with shared leisure time. One of the examples was offered by Ostin<sup>3</sup>: “For a couple leisure, I guess we have a few specific shows that we record and we watch together.” He also reported to be satisfied with both his family and marital leisure. Kathrine<sup>5</sup> also described the time she spent with her husband as simple and home-oriented:

We spend time at home, before we go to bed or in bed we are talking or we are in the house together or cut the grass together... Because when we go to the restaurant we go with kids, not just me and him.

#### ***5.4.1. No Influence of SNS Use on Couples, Marital Satisfaction and Leisure Satisfaction***

Around half of the participants who reported spending time together as a couple also

believed that the use of social network sites did not influence the quantity and quality of spousal leisure and marital satisfaction. For example, one of the husbands – Robert<sup>4</sup> – reported,

My wife uses it [facebook] but she still spends time with me and I don't think that it affects the time that we spend together. Plus, she is doing it if I am doing other things – maybe working on home projects while she is doing that... or something of that nature, but we still make time for each other. So I don't think that affects the time that we spend together.

One of the wives – Sandra<sup>1</sup> – who was among the most frequent users of facebook, when asked whether her use of facebook influenced her marital satisfaction, stated, “I don't think it does. You'll have to ask my husband whether it affects our marital satisfaction. I am not sure. But it's fine with me! I am good with it.” Sandra<sup>1</sup>'s husband scored 35 (the maximum score) on the family satisfaction scale, which seems to confirm her supposition that her heavy use of facebook did not influence his marital satisfaction.

#### ***5.4.2. Negative Influences of SNS Use on Couples, Marital Satisfaction and Leisure Satisfaction***

Some of the participants reported feeling some dissatisfaction with the use of social network sites by their partners. The spouses were concerned about the time “wasted” on facebook and other social network sites and some commented that this time could be spent on more “useful” things or on face-to-face communication with their family members or friends. For example, Kathrine<sup>5</sup> (wife) described her husband's complaints about her time spent on

facebook which he perceived to be wasted:

Sometimes when I go to the computer [...] he says “hey, what are you doing? Why are you doing facebook? Come with me, let's talk.” But when I show him the pics of the family and that I am talking to them – he is happy about that. But he always prefers to call them by phone not to send messages.

Kathrine5 also added,

I don't know why, but he doesn't like me to use computer a lot, he is saying, “hey, you are wasting your time, you can do something else, you can go to the university, you can study or something,” and I say, “hey, it just taking like 10 min.” But I don't know why he do that to us. He likes to have us close to him or next to him or helping him.

Interestingly, why generally still relatively high, Kathrine5's husband's marital satisfaction was the lowest among all of the participants (15 out of 20). Another wife was dissatisfied with her husband's interest in following people via social network sites. Melisa3 would rather prefer her husband to spend time in face-to-face interaction, which she found to be more meaningful:

Well, he keeps bringing me all of these updates from... He wants me to see some funny songs somebody posted and... Sometimes it's funny and sometimes I just think I don't really care about these people, so I don't wanna see their postings. So, I feel like we should be making more couple friends with real people instead of some random people on the Internet.

While no couples said that the use of social network sites was a factor influencing their marital



satisfaction (neither their marital satisfaction scores suggested a problem), some of them believed that it did influence their companionship and their shared time together.

#### ***5.4.3. Positive Influences of SNS Use on Couples, Marital Satisfaction and Leisure Satisfaction***

Despite concerns among some of the participants, there were also spouses who saw the use of social network sites as beneficial to their relationships. They believed that social network sites provided topics for conversation and helped to stay in touch with extended family. Jeremy5 (husband) was grateful that his wife stayed in touch with his family and informed him about events in their lives. He commented,

My wife, she does [shares information from facebook], like family from [country of origin] “hey, he is doing this and that.” [...] It's nice, because I know she is kind of worried about my family, like what's going on over there. My niece says hi to me or something. And it's nice to know.

Ostin3 believed that social network sites could provide topics for discussion between him and his wife. He shared,

I can think of very occasional times when there will be a positive effect from facebook, like we see something or share something and that will spark a conversation, so that will happen occasionally. I can't really think of any time when there's been negative effect from it on our marriage or something like that.

While some spouses believed there were positive or negative outcomes of their use of

social network sites on their marriage, this effect, overall, was considered to be relatively moderate. Many couples also reported no influence of social network sites on their marital leisure and satisfaction. However, it is important to remember that marital leisure was quite limited in most of the families due to the presence of children in the household.

### **5.5. The Rules Regarding the Use of Social Network Sites by Family Members and the Influences of Those Rules on Family and Marital Satisfaction**

One of the questions we wanted to explore in this study was whether families had any rules governing the use of social network sites and how these rules influenced relationships within the family. Many of the interviewed parents reported that they did not think such rules were needed. The reasons for that were trust they had in their children's judgment and reasonable use of social network sites by their children. During the family interview, Kathrine<sup>5</sup> (mother), said, "I am really happy because nobody here is addicted to facebook. Even if he [son] talks to his friend, it's not like he is [on it] all the time. He doesn't get crazy, it's like normal." Kathrine<sup>5</sup> also made it clear that while she considered herself to be a strict parent, she did not notice any issues her son had with facebook:

I never speak about rules because I see that he is doing fine. And sometimes he knows that we are very strict with rules and I don't have to let him know nothing because I can see that he is doing pretty well.

Her son – Dennis<sup>5</sup> – agreed with his mother: "So basically, they trust me... Yeah, they are strict, so it's embedded that I know the rules." Another mother had a very similar opinion. Marisa<sup>7</sup> said,

I just don't think that we felt like we needed that [rules about social network sites' use]. When girls were younger we talked about safety, like don't give your phone number to strangers, people might be not who they seem to be. But other than that we don't really have rules.

One of the teenage boys – Dennis<sup>5</sup> – reported that it was assumed that no one should use cell phones while spending time with the family. He commented, “No, I think it's mostly implied that it's family time – don't take it [cell phone] out, and I don't take it out. I just accepted it but what I've learned is that when they are not looking I would take it out.” Most of the quotes above show that while rules did not exist “officially” in the family, there were some unspoken rules that were “imbedded” and “implied” in the behavior of family members.

However, there were also families that imposed rules on how social network sites could be used. Those rules included limited screen time, use of social network sites in public areas, appropriate times and places of social network sites use and appropriate information to share via social network sites. Most of the parents said that while those rules existed, they rarely had a need to enforce them since one or two conversations with their children were sufficient to create a reasonable pattern of social network sites' use. For example, Sebastian<sup>6</sup> – a father of a teenage girl – shared,

That was no more than a couple of times, just explaining not put information, not give out any information, not put it on facebook. And not to accept any person that wants to be their friend on facebook. And not spend so much time on that. And they understood it's just bad for us.

Interestingly, however, Sebastian6 (father) had generally very negative view of social network sites and modern technology and believed its use by his daughter had to be minimized.

It's just bad for us, it's a socially bad thing that sooner or later everybody pays for. I'm an old-fashion. If you wanna be social, don't do it through the computer, do it like all normal human beings, go out – whether it's a cafe or restaurant or bar or theater, and you interact as a human being, not through a computer. I understand that people can be apart and yes, it shortens distances [but] if I am not facing the person it's worthless, it's useless, it's just wrong.

However, despite seemingly high level of dislike and mistrust towards SNSs, Sebastian 6 showed high scores on the family satisfaction scale. It would be beneficial to explore further what factors influenced Sebastian 6's high level of satisfaction.

Other parents felt more positively about social network sites and had fewer rules about their use. Oliver2 (father) explained during the family interview,

Well, we have one [rule] that is fairly broad – limits on total screen time, whether that's computer or watching a movie or watching whatever. Then, we debate whether using itunes and using facebook counts for those times, so it's not quite as rigid. We've certainly talked with both boys about “don't put that on facebook, you know, don't do that, that's really bad idea.”

Interestingly, while Oliver2 had a rather positive attitude towards SNSs, his family satisfaction score was rather low (20 out of 35), which could suggest that his family satisfaction was influenced by some other factors. Oliver2's wife also added that the time spent on facebook was

more welcome than simply “screen time” because it involved some social aspect. She shared,

I don't know, it's sort of interesting because right now, I hope you don't mind me saying this, but [our son] has some restrictions on overall screen time during the week 'cause, you know, he has to concentrate on studies and stuff, but we have not disallowed facebook because we realize it's important way for kids to keep connected socially. So, he is not supposed to spend tons of time on it, but we know it's important for him to check in with everybody.

Using social network sites in public areas of the house was another rule many parents highlighted. While the majority of participants respected privacy of each other' social network profiles, some of them also made sure that computers were located in the public areas of the house. Emily2 (mother), when asked whether there were any rules about social network sites use in their family, explained,

No, but I would say... you see those two computers right there? I mean there is a reason they are side by side. A couple of reasons, but one is yeah... it's not like I read over his [son] shoulder, but I think it's just kind of helps to be more aware of what's going on with the kids.

The father from the same family – Oliver2 – pointed to a computer placed in the corner and said, “That's the computer they are typically logged into. It's in a public place.” Interestingly, many parents believed that it was sufficient to place a computer in the area where they could observe its use, which also is indicative of the level of trust they had in their children.

Most of the families at least once discussed with their children what information was

appropriate to share on facebook and other social network sites. Ashley<sup>4</sup>, a mother of a teenage boy, elaborated during the family interview on her son's affirmative comment that this rule was discussed:

Like he said, it's just kind of common sense. We know what's appropriate, what's not appropriate, and I don't know if they ever have done, and even with texting and all thing, they would know what's appropriate and what is not appropriate.

Some parents said that they considered it inappropriate to post too many details about their families and personal lives, as well as pictures of their family. As Sebastian<sup>6</sup> – one of the fathers -- explained, “How can I say that... Again, I am old-fashioned, I don't need to know anybody's business if it doesn't affect me and I don't need anybody to know my business...”

Other parents were particularly worried about their children presenting themselves in a negative light by posting curse words and inappropriate pictures. For example, Sandra<sup>1</sup> – a mother of two teenage children – said,

Well, [...] we just have a talk and say “we are not gonna say it on there.” Or like, you know, I don't like them to download pictures until I've seen them. You know, I don't want them to do something inappropriate. ‘Cause all that stuff stays on there... and then... Not that they would anyway but...

Many of the interviewed parents also set limits on when and where it was allowed to use social network sites. Church or family dinners were named among the times and places when the use of social network sites was considered inappropriate. One of the boys participating in the study -- Dennis<sup>5</sup>-- shared during the interview: “Usually they tell me in church 'Put your phone

away', 'get off facebook'. Normally, I know it. I don't check my phone for facebook messages.” Some of the parents believed that social network sites had to be used only until certain time at night. For example, Anita<sup>6</sup> (teenage daughter) shared,

Like they trust me, but they just say they don't want me there late at night because that's the time when I should be resting or sleeping. I think that would be the only restriction. [...] I agree with that because they have a point. Sometimes it's kind of annoying in summer time because I don't have to wake up early in the morning, so that would be the only time that it comes in conflict with the restriction.

Her mother – Olivia<sup>6</sup> – also explained that since it was rather hard to control the use of social network sites, she preferred to have a more trusting relationships with her daughter and to teach her online behavior in a less controlling way. She said,

If I tell her not to use it she is probably going to use it even though I said not to. So, I prefer to give her a chance to use it but tell her a couple of times to be really careful and I also tell her to not put any pictures of me or your close family, because I don't want nobody to see me. Only if you really like the picture show it to me and we'll discuss that. I don't want anybody to talk about me or my family. And I really don't trust facebook, it can turn around in a really sad ways.

Olivia<sup>6</sup> further explained her unease and suspicion towards SNSs by the hurt feelings of her daughter when she once read the posts her friends and ex-boyfriend made on facebook. She disliked that facebook provided the opportunity to make “private issues public.”

Interestingly, in many cases children agreed with their parents about the need to be

careful with information they posted on facebook. However, none of the teenagers expressed similar distrust and negative views of SNSs as some of the parents. Most of the children responded to the rules with understanding and did not mind following them. Such obedience of the teens might be explained by the reasoning provided by their parents and the fact that no extremely strict rules were imposed on them. There were also teens, however, who admitted to breaking the rules when their parents were not watching. For example, Dennis<sup>5</sup> checked his cell phone in church when his parents were not paying attention.

## **5.6. Summary**

The findings of this study provide an insight into the patterns of social network sites' use in families. This study also reveals how the use of social network sites by different family members influences and is influenced by family/marital leisure, satisfaction with family/marital leisure, and family/marital satisfaction among family members. The participants reported that their use of SNSs influenced their family leisure and family satisfaction in a negative way since it could cause problems with development of social skills among children, decrease the time spent with the family, or decrease attention during face-to-face interactions with family members. The family members also described the positive effects the use of SNSs had on their family leisure and family satisfaction. Among such positive outcomes named by the participants were new ideas for leisure and strategies to improve the functioning of their family, ideas to spark a conversation, shared interests between family members, and facilitated communication with distant relatives. Social network sites also helped family members to manage organizational



issues and follow the whereabouts of each other. Some of the participants claimed that SNS use did not influence families and their leisure, while others expressed some concerns associated with SNS use among families. These concerns were related to disagreements on the matters of privacy of personal profiles and protection of personal information, as well as perceptions of the excessive levels of social network sites' use.

The influence of family satisfaction and satisfaction with family leisure on parents' and children's use of social network sites was also different for various families. While for some participants satisfaction and the use of social network sites were not related to each other, others reported to use social network sites less if they had disagreements in the family since they did not want to publicize negative emotions. There were also others who reported to use social network sites more when they had family problems due to social support provided by close friends on facebook.

Similarly to family satisfaction, there were different patterns of relationships among the spousal use of social network sites (as a leisure activity), quantity and quality of their leisure, leisure satisfaction, and marital satisfaction. Spouses reported negative, positive or no effect of the SNS use on their leisure and marital satisfaction. Participants also discussed the rules they had in their families regarding the use of social network sites and how these rules influenced their family and marital satisfaction. Among the rules mentioned by the families were limits on total screen time and on what information was appropriate to post, as well as places and times where usage of social network sites was acceptable. The further evaluation of the findings will be provided in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

The major findings of this study were divided into four categories and will be discussed in several subsections. I will first present the major findings related to the influence of social network sites on the quantity and quality of family leisure (with each other), family members' satisfaction with leisure as a family, and their family satisfaction. I will then discuss how the use of social network sites (as a leisure activity) by spouses influenced the quantity and quality of spousal leisure (with each other), spouses' satisfaction with leisure as a couple, and their marital satisfaction. Lastly, I will discuss the rules regarding the use of social network sites reported by different families and how those rules influenced their marital and family satisfaction.

#### **6.1. The Interaction between the Use of Social Network Sites and the Quantity and Quality of Family Leisure, Satisfaction with Family Leisure, and Family Satisfaction.**

The results with respect to how the use of social network sites influenced the quantity and quality of family leisure, satisfaction with family leisure, as well as family satisfaction were mixed. One of the most important findings was related to the fact that, unlike some of the previous literature would suggest (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Watkins, 2009; Whitty, 2005) none of the family members found the use of social network sites to be seriously detrimental to their lives or to their family satisfaction. In turn, the relationship between the use of SNSs, satisfaction with family leisure, and family satisfaction has turned out to be quite complex. While some people claimed their use of social network sites did not have any effect on family leisure and family satisfaction, others reported that there were several different ways social network sites influenced

their free time behavior and family satisfaction.

One of the main changes brought by the use of social network sites was a decrease in the amount of time people spent in leisure with their families. Similar findings were previously reported by Mesch (2006a). According to his study, adolescents who frequently used the Internet spent less time with their families. That was especially true in cases when Internet was used for social interaction.

The attitudes of family members to this decrease in family leisure time varied. Many participants did not find it to be problematic. Most of those people considered their use of social network sites to be reasonable and not addictive. Some justified their use of facebook by their need to relax or have something to do when other family members were busy with other activities or used other technologies. Some participants also explained such decrease in family leisure time by the age of their children. Several teens in the study reported that it was more interesting for them to spend time with their peers who understood them better than their parents or younger siblings. Social network sites provided youth with additional channels for this interaction. Such findings are not surprising given that at this age (13-18) parental influence tends to wane and, conversely, interaction with peer group increases, and becomes more intimate and influential (Berndt, 1982; Russell, 2009). As suggested by Larson's (1983) study, youth valued leisure time spent with friends for the high level of enjoyment, freedom and predominantly positive feedback provided by the peers. Most parents participating in the study respected their children's desire to stay in touch with their friends since they perceived it to be a natural part of their development. As a result, they did not perceive decreased level of family leisure as influencing their overall leisure and family satisfaction.

There was also another group of participants, however, who expressed concerns over the decreased time spent together with the family. Similarly to previous research that suggested family leisure is an important factor influencing family functioning, satisfaction, and communication (Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006; Kelly, 1997; Shaw, 1997; Shaw & Dawson, 2001), all of our participants believed that shared leisure time was an important part of what it meant to be a family. Thus, there were many family members – both parents and children – who expressed their dissatisfaction with the insufficient amount of time spent with members of immediate and extended family. Moreover, some parents were also concerned that inadequate face-to-face interaction could prevent children from developing social skills. As previous research shows, in families with children, family leisure plays important educational roles by providing youth with opportunities to learn about traditions, social and moral norms, as well as create good memories of family life (Shaw & Dawson; Trussell & Shaw, 2007; Trussell & Shaw, 2009). Similarly, concern of the participants over the perceived lack of development of social skills suggested that they also considered family leisure to be purposive, or having certain goals in mind (Shaw & Dawson). Similarly, the participants used facebook and other social network sites to stay in touch with their relatives and to share news about their own families. Some of the participants also relied on social network sites and technology in general to connect and find common interests with the members of their immediate family.

Not only the quantity of interaction was influenced by the use of social network sites, the quality of communication was reported to decrease as well. In cases when family members were simultaneously engaged in both the use of social network sites and face-to-face interaction, the members of the family felt that attention of their partner was not fully focused on them.

Interestingly, while teenage children are often perceived to be more engaged in social network sites' use and even over-use them at time (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010; Watkins, 2009), the results of our study showed that it was not the case for every family. On several occasions it was the teenage children who described their parents as heavy users of facebook. They also discussed their dissatisfaction with the quality of interaction when parents were simultaneously focused on social network sites and tried to carry on a conversation. Such distracted attention decreased satisfaction of family members with their family leisure. Their scores on family satisfaction scale were also relatively low. As previous research shows, the quality of interaction during leisure influences satisfaction of spouses with their leisure time and their marital satisfaction (Flora & Segrin, 1998; Holman & Jacquart, 1988). Our research suggests that similar relationships exist between the level of attention during interaction among different family members (parents and children) and satisfaction with family leisure.

Besides decreased amount of time spent in family leisure, the individual and family interviews revealed several other issues that caused disagreements among family members. For some families it was differences in the perception of "excessive" level of social network sites use, while for others it was the disclosure of personal information via social network sites and/or respecting the privacy of social network profiles. For example, a common topic for disagreement among family members was related to how much time spent on social network sites was considered excessive. Both parents and children revealed that they sometimes were too engaged in online activities and that it caused their family members to be upset or irritated. Interestingly, while traditionally teenagers have been described as the first adopters and heavy users of technology (Watkins, 2009), our study did not confirm such patterns. Contrary to such general

view, in several cases our teenage participants claimed it was their parents who were more proficient in issues of technology and were over-using social network sites. Such findings support examples provided by Turkle (2011), who described cases of children striving to win their parents' attention over technology and even suggesting to introduce a ban on cell phones during sporting events and family dinners. One should be careful interpreting the findings of this study, though: while the interviewed parents were relatively heavy users of SNSs, we should not assume that this would be the case for the general population. Considering the screening criteria for participation, at least one of the parents had to use SNSs at least once a week. Thus, parents who did not use SNSs at all would not be able to take part in this study. In relation to gender, women in our study were seemingly heavier SNS users than men. However, there were no significant differences between men and women in their proficiency levels. Such relatively equal proficiency in SNSs could be explained by the user-friendly and easy to understand interface of most of the SNSs.

Disagreement about privacy of personal social network profiles was another issue raised during individual and family interviews. Some of the participants felt that their privacy was violated when their spouses were "looking over their shoulders" to see what they were doing or when parents used facebook profiles of their children. While most of the family members were sharing information from facebook and other social network sites with their spouses and children, they were also unhappy when family members wanted to learn information without their permission. Such lack of rules about privacy with respect to new technology was previously discussed in the literature. Cell phones were blamed for blurring boundaries between intimate and public, office and home, and work and leisure (Lasen, 2005; Levinson, 2004). Lanigan

(2009) claimed that the use of ICTs and the Internet played an important role in changing boundaries between families and the outside world, as well as between family members. However, this topic still requires more attention due to the fast-changing technological environment in which modern families operate. Moreover, due to the novelty of the issue, families have little guidance to follow on what are the best ways to navigate family-technology interactions. Thus, many families develop their own rules and expectations about their relationships with technology and learn from their mistakes what works for their family.

Several parents also expressed concern about the public nature of facebook and other social network sites. Most of the parents reported having discussions with their children about not revealing overly personal information in their posts, including information about their family, and how they felt about some of their friends and issues they were dealing with. Most of the parents said they trusted their children's judgment, but they also stressed that it was important to protect their children' safety, image and feelings. The issue of publicizing personal information and self-representation via social network sites is not new. Social network sites were previously praised for providing youth with an opportunity to "try on" different identities and to shape their own perception of themselves (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Russell & Holmes, 1996; Watkins, 2009). Internet and social network sites were even called a new channel of youth socialization, along with parents and school. However, reflecting the concerns of some parents in our study, social network sites may also hurt adolescents. By revealing the information about their favorite music and movies, events in their lives, emotions and thoughts, youth presented a detailed image of their personality and values (Turkle, 2011; Watkins, 2009) and expected their friends' feedback. Such feedback may either provide encouragement and admiration or damage

one's self-esteem. More research is needed to explore the issue of boundaries that exist between members of the family and the outside world. While teenage desire to experiment with their individual identity is normal for this developmental stage, the outcomes of using technology for this purpose might be more detrimental than the previously used media. Similarly to much more serious and detrimental outcomes of cyber bullying (comparing to old-fashion face-to-face bullying), on-line experiments with identity could be more damaging to a young individual.

Lower leisure and family satisfaction was not only a result of decreased quantity or quality of leisure time; the use of social network sites by family members also directly influenced their satisfaction with leisure and evaluation of their families. Several participants mentioned that comparing themselves to other families whose pictures they saw on facebook made them feel dissatisfied with their own leisure patterns and consider their families inadequate when compared to those of their friends. Whether it was more and better activities their friends' children participated in, or "happy" involvement of all family members (and husbands in particular), our participants reported that pictures posted on facebook often made them feel upset. While media and advertisements usually present family as a happy, supportive and loving group of people, social network sites might increase the desire to meet the unrealistic image of ideal family life. Moreover, while images in the media may be perceived as staged and illusory, comparing one's family to "real-world people" with similar demographic characteristics creates an impression that one should be able to achieve similar outcomes with respect to family leisure and home life. Interestingly, many of our participants realized that people usually post only pictures of happy moments on social network sites since their own pictures were a reflection of their family as a happy and successful one. However, this overly idealistic representation of their



friends' families still influenced their feelings about themselves, their families and their family leisure. According to the author's knowledge, this phenomenon has not been discussed before and provides unique insight into the influences of social network sites on family leisure and family satisfaction.

As with many other phenomena in the social world, participants held both negative and positive views about the influence of social network sites on family leisure and family satisfaction. Despite some negative perception of the social network sites' use, many participants did not find the use of social network sites to be problematic and believed it had a positive effect on their leisure as a family. Some reported that they borrowed ideas for vacations and family leisure from pictures posted by other people. Moreover, by using social network sites they could see what it meant for their relatives and friends to be a well-functioning family, which gave them motivation to achieve higher standards in their own families. While for many interviewees comparing themselves to others led to negative feelings about their family and leisure, there were also those who recognized the positive influence of facebook and other social network sites. Sharing information and showing each other pictures and jokes they saw on facebook could spark a conversation and, in some cases, was reported as the only way to connect with some family members, especially those whose interests were focused on technology. In many cases information that different family members shared with each other was related to the events in the lives of their family friends and relatives. Social network sites allowed our participants to find long lost friends and stay in touch with members of extended family who lived in distant locations. Husbands often felt grateful for their wives' maintaining contact with their relatives by adding them as "friends" on facebook. Such an opportunity offered by social network sites was

discussed in extant research as one of the major benefits of information communication technology (Horst, 2010).

Participants not only used social network sites to learn about events in the lives of their friends and relatives, but also used them as a tool to share information about their own families. Many parents reported that they posted information and pictures of important events in their lives, activities their children were involved in (music performances, sporting events) or simply happy everyday moments. Interestingly, most of the participants found it inappropriate to post anything that would represent their family as unhappy or malfunctioning, which raises a question of whether family members were simply informing their friends and relatives about their family lives or trying to create a certain image of their family. Our interviewees also realized that the often idealized image of other families on facebook and other social network sites was probably not very realistic, and yet they were concerned about their inability to match this “ideal.” While at times participants compared themselves to that image and felt that their family was not as good as families of their friends and relatives (as was discussed above), at other times they reported having a sense of community and a sense of belonging to something bigger. This finding would require additional attention since, to the author's knowledge, no previous studies discussed development of family identity through the use of technology. Moreover, there is no research explaining development of the sense of belonging to something bigger by associating with friends who have families.

Internet and computers were mentioned in the literature as channels to connect family members who live apart (Horst, 2010). They were also suggested to provide the only way for parents to connect with their technology savvy teenage children (Horst). However, this study has

helped us to uncover several other ways social network sites could benefit their users and their families. Among such benefits were providing ideas for family leisure and for healthy family functioning, providing topics for conversation, as well as providing opportunity for presentation of one's own family. Moreover, while Horst discussed Internet and computer use as a way to connect with youth, our study suggested that in families with parents who are heavy users of ICT and specifically social network sites, these websites are often the only way for adolescent children to connect with their parents. Our study has also added new findings to the knowledge on self-representation via social network sites: while the creation of individual's identity “on-line” was previously discussed by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert (2009); Russell and Holmes (1996); and Watkins (2009), to the best of our knowledge, the idea of presenting one's *family identity* has not been mentioned in previous studies. Such an array of emotions evoked by the representation of family image and comparison of this image to families of relatives and friends is a new finding that was not previously discussed in the context of family. Further research on the emotional outcomes of the use of social network sites among families is needed.

Social network sites were also used by the participants in a more utilitarian way: some family members were arranging times to pick up their children, and using them to organize birthday celebrations, family reunions or to stay informed about the whereabouts of their children. Lastly, one of the mothers reported to use facebook to stay informed about the feelings and emotional health of her teenage son. She claimed that having access to her son's profile was beneficial for her family since knowing about his problems allowed her to be more responsive to his needs. Such invasion of her son's privacy (the teen was not aware that his mother was accessing his profile) was mentioned by this participant as a benefit of social network sites and

thus was included in this category. This issue requires further examination as the new technologies are likely to lead to reevaluation of boundaries of information flow between members of the same family or between members of a family and the outside world.

Broderick (1993) discussed the danger that the media may impose on family's privacy, lifestyle and beliefs. According to the system theory, the family is constantly striving to obtain a homeostasis and, thus, to preserve the boundaries between the family and the outside world. With SNSs the information flow between inside and outside of the family becomes even easier, more instant and uncontrolled. Sociotechnological Model discussed how different characteristics of technology (user-friendliness) might influence how family members interact with it. It also discussed how different dimensions of the environment in which family lives (including community adoption of certain technology, promotion of it on the market or usage at the work place) influence the relationships between family and SNSs. Since most adolescents have SNS profiles, being an SNS user is likely to be normative to many teenagers. Although the number of adults using SNSs is rapidly increasing (Madden, 2010), some parents may be slower to adopt this technology and more concerned about some of its potential dangers to family life (including permeable boundaries between the public and the private).

In this study, following the assumption of bi-directional influences between families and technology introduced in the Sociotechnological Model (Lanigan, 2009), we examined how family satisfaction and satisfaction with family leisure influenced parents' and children's use of social network sites. The findings in this respect varied: while some participants believed that their family/leisure satisfaction had no influence on how they used social network sites, others claimed it had either positive or negative effect. In the former group of family members

(claiming no effect), the pattern of social network sites usage did not change in accordance with how they felt about their families. Some of the participants from the latter group (positive or negative effect) claimed that during the time of family tensions they used social network sites less to avoid publicizing family problems or sharing personal emotions. They also reported to decrease the use of social network sites due to feeling depressed and lack of desire to engage in social interactions. There were also participants, however, who claimed to use social network sites more during disagreements with family: while many of them said they would not publicly air complains about family life, they would use social network sites for distraction or to seek support from close friends. Similar issue was discussed by Mesch (2006b) who found that in families with higher level of intergenerational conflict children were also using Internet for social communication and support. The influence of family relationships and satisfaction on the use of social network sites differed among family members, with youth and women being more likely to change their SNS use based on their level of family satisfaction. However, such impression might have been a result of the fact that fathers in general did not use SNSs as much as mothers and children. Interestingly, while it would be expected that the difference between parents and youth would also be in the amount of time spent using SNSs, with youth being more frequent users of this technology (Lenhart & Madden, 2007), there were no noticeable differences in who was considered a more heavy user of SNSs in the interviewed families – the child or the parent, specifically the mother. While these findings provide a brief glance into the issue, further research is needed in order to provide more details on how people's relationships with each other influence their technology use.

## **6.2. The Relationships between Spousal Use of Social Network Sites (as a Leisure Activity) and Quantity and Quality of Spousal Leisure, Spouses' Satisfaction with Leisure as a Couple, and Marital Satisfaction.**

This study also explored the relationships between spousal use of social network sites (as a leisure activity) and quantity and quality of spousal leisure, spouses' satisfaction with leisure as a couple, and marital satisfaction. The findings regarding the topic of marital satisfaction were more limited in scope as compared to the findings related to family satisfaction since the majority of couples admitted that their marital leisure have been "rare" or even "almost non-existent." Since most of the families had several children of different ages living at home, many parents said that their time together as a couple was very hard to organize. Such findings support the well-known pattern of change in marital satisfaction over the lifespan, with a decline after the birth of the first child (Hirschberger, Srivastava, Marsh, Cowan, & Cowan, 2009) and an increase after the last child leaves the house (Anderson, Russell, & Schuman, 1983; Gelles, 1995). Most of the spouses participating in the study reported that they would like to increase the time spent together as a couple. However, there was a difference between wives and husbands on how they saw the pattern of marital leisure. While women seemed to have a more idealistic and optimistic view on the amount of time they spent with their spouses, husbands looked at the situation from a more practical perspective and realistically estimated that the increase in the amount of spousal leisure was unlikely to happen before the children left home. There were also couples, however, who were more successful in maintaining some degree of spousal leisure, even if it was based primarily on simple home-oriented activities that did not require significant amount of time and financial resources. In many cases, couples reported that they were able to have such shared leisure due to the fact that their children were in their late teens and did not require too much of

their parents' attention, or due to specific work arrangements (telecommuting, work at home).

Although most of the couples in this study did not believe social network sites influenced how much time they spent together, there were also those who believed their companionship and shared time were influenced by the use of social network sites. Some participants were concerned about the time “wasted” on facebook and suggested that this time could have been used by their spouses in a more “productive” way. Other participants preferred their spouses to spend more time in face-to-face interactions with family members or friends instead of following online “people they have never met.” The study also helped to detect some positive influences of social network sites on marital leisure and relationships. Some spouses believed that SNSs provided joint topics for conversation and opportunity to maintain contact with extended family members. Similar topics were explored in relation to cell phone use by couples. As Taylor and Vincent (2005) reported, texting (being attentive and sending messages throughout the day) helped some couples to feel more flirtatious with each other. Opportunity to stay connected with family members who live apart and providing shared topics of interest were previously discussed by Horst (2010). Most of findings in my study offer new insights into the use of social network sites by families and its relationships with marital satisfaction.

### **6.3. The Existence of Rules about the Use of SNSs in Families and the Influence of these Rules on the Relationships between Family Members.**

One of the issues that could potentially create disagreements and decrease marital/family satisfaction was the existence of rules regarding the use of social network sites. As was discussed by Mesch (2006a; 2006b) and Watkins (2009), competition over computer time or differences in competency level between children and parents could create conflict in families. Since it might

be expected that parents impose some limitations on the time their children spend on SNSs, along with possibility that some youth could develop addictive use patterns (Watkins), it would be reasonable to expect that relationships in some families might suffer from the existence of such rules. In cases when adolescents are more proficient technology users and may disregard rules imposed by parents the relationships might be damaged even further. Interestingly, however, the majority of the interviewed parents believed that such rules were not needed in their families as they trusted their children's judgment and believed their use of SNSs was "reasonable." The "unspoken" rules that some families adhered to included limiting the total screen time of children, use of SNSs in the public areas of the house, restrictions on information children were allowed to share on-line, as well as when and where they were allowed to access social network sites (e.g., church or family dinners). Considering the fact that most of the rules mentioned by the participants were unspoken and did not have to be enforced, the interviewees did not perceive them as problematic. Both parents and adolescents claimed that they discussed why the rules existed and did not find them excessively strict, which also helped in their implementation. While participants in our study did not report to have any issues with rules related to technology, further research is needed to understand how technology use is approached in families where children or adults display excessive use patterns or addictive behaviors.

Our study showed that while there were several parents who viewed facebook and other social network sites as detrimental to the development of children and to the relationships in their families, none of the interviewed adolescents held strong negative opinions about this type of technology. We can assume that growing up in a society where access to and use of ICT are taken for granted, youth accepts it as expected and unquestionable component of everyday life. For



many parents, on the other hand, information communication technology was not a part of their every-day environment while growing up and thus might be perceived as intrusive novelty that leads to changes in their habits and routines. The perception of social network sites also seemed to differ between men and women interviewed in this study. The conclusion about the higher importance and value of SNSs for women (vs. men) can be made based on the fact that wives in our study were more heavy users of SNSs than their husbands and that they maintained social interaction not only with their own extended families but also with their husband's relatives. Further examination of this topic could provide us with better understanding of the differences and similarities in the perceptions of different types of modern technology between younger and older generations, as well as between men and women.

#### **6.4. Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Family Satisfaction and the Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Marital Satisfaction.**

My research project was sensitized by two theories – the symbolic interaction family theory (White & Klein, 2008) and the Sociotechnological Model (Lanigan, 2009), as well as the concept of purposive leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Symbolic interaction family theory (White & Klein) allowed me to define the scope of the study and the main concepts used in the study. It also helped me to focus on issues meaningful to my participants. While I looked at each participant as an individual I also remembered that due to constant interaction the family as a unit creates certain meanings that are shared by all family members. Moreover, by using symbolic interaction family theory as my synthesizing theory I also paid attention to major nonverbal signs that could give me clues if the verbal response supported / disagreed with the nonverbal one. In cases when there was some uncertainty I prompted the participants further to

clarify what they were not reporting.

The concept of purposive leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 2001) was also used as a synthesizing concept for this study and considered during the process of data collection and analysis. The findings of my study provided support for the validity of the concept and extended its application to a new setting and a new aspect of family functioning. Social network sites were often used by families to stay in touch with distant family members, which led to a higher level of family satisfaction and, potentially, marital satisfaction since husbands, in the majority of cases, were grateful for their spouses' concern for their family members. Some of the parents also used SNSs to share information about their families and children with members of extended family by posting pictures on-line. By doing this parents pursued the goal of informing their extended family about their family life and potentially to improve their own family satisfaction. While I also expected to find more purposive type of marital leisure, the data in this respect were rather scarce.

The Sociotechnological Model (Lanigan, 2009) was also a big part of my synthesizing process. In my data analysis I paid close attention to the individual, family, technology, and environmental influences on the family – technology relationship. The study revealed that among the interviewed families, gender, age, and ethnic background were related to the way they adopted the SNSs and how the use of SNSs was related to their family and marital satisfaction. Moreover, the characteristics of the technology itself – easy to learn and adopt, and accessible almost any time anywhere had an effect on how its use was related to family and marital satisfaction.

While creating a set of questions, collecting data and analyzing them, I also constantly

kept in mind the theories and concepts that lay at the foundation of the Sociotechnological Model, including the Family System Theory, the developmental theory, and the ecological approach. For example, the collection of data from both parents and children was influenced by the Family System Theory according to which family is not a group of individual components but rather a system with interacting and interdependent parts. The issue of boundaries discussed by the Family System Theory was also relevant in my study since SNSs provide an opportunity for family members to re-define the boundaries between themselves and between their family and the outside world. Those boundaries set to protect family values, privacy and life-style can be easily influenced through the use of SNSs. The developmental theory also influenced my study, especially at the data analysis stage. I tried to consider different life stages that families were in and look for additional explanations of certain patterns of leisure and SNSs use. Ecological approach that considers technology and social world interaction to be bidirectional was applied while defining potential direction of relationships between the use of SNSs and family / marital satisfaction.

While my research project was sensitized by symbolic interaction family theory and the Sociotechnological Model, a new model was needed to present the relationships that surfaced in this study. Thus, the findings of this study were combined in two models: the Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Family Satisfaction and the Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Marital Satisfaction (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

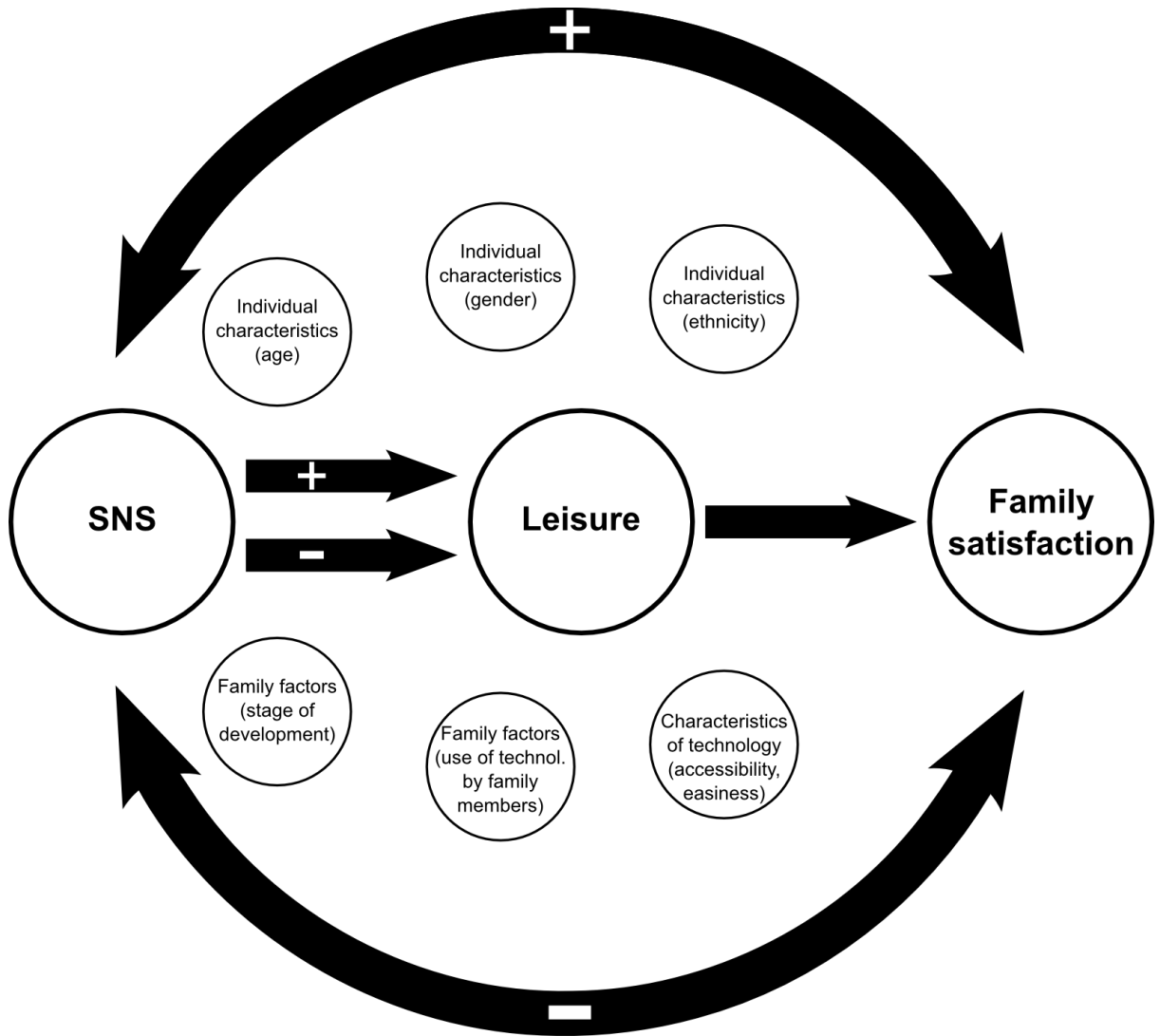
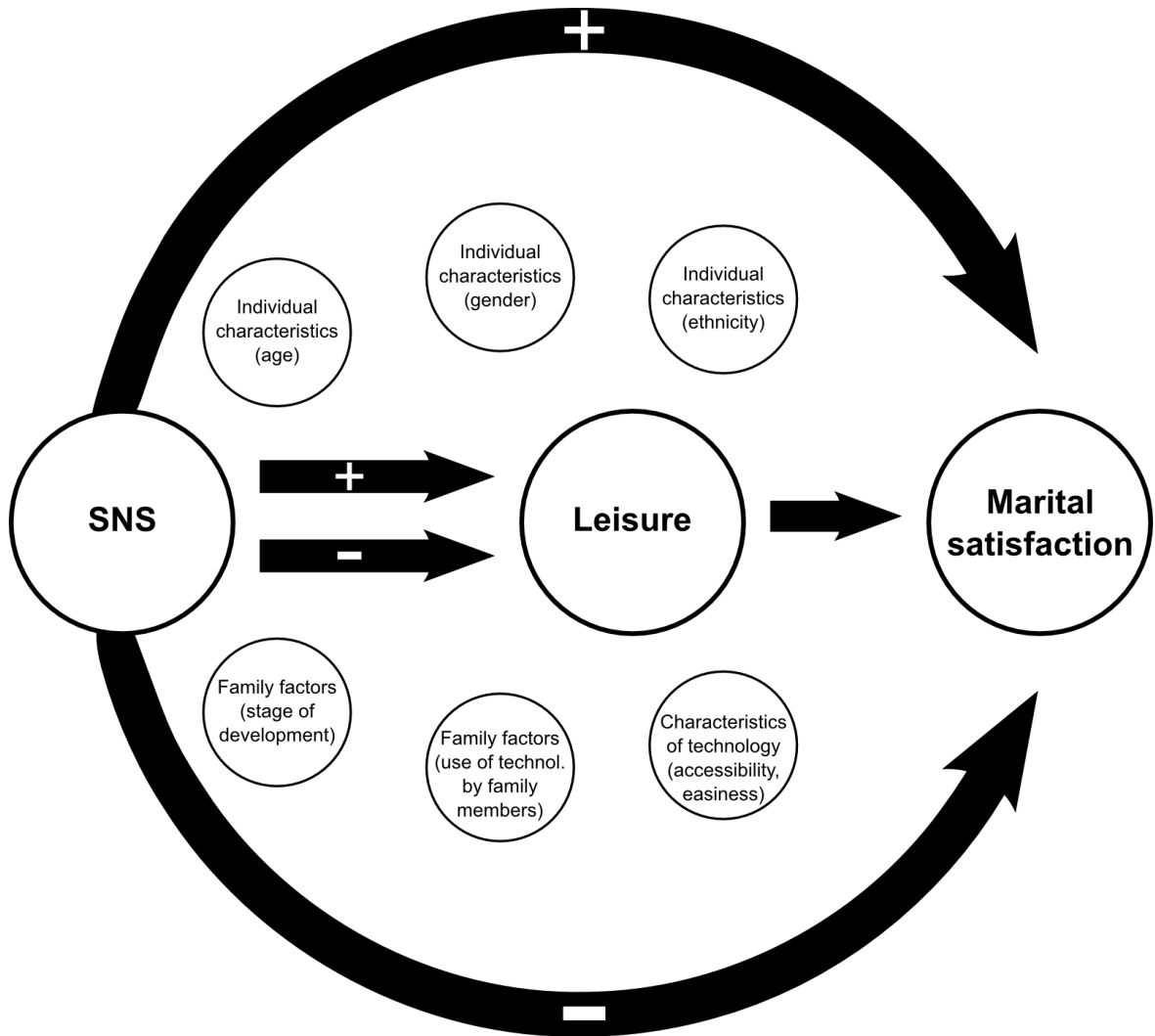


Figure 2. Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Family Satisfaction



*Figure 3. Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Marital Satisfaction*

*Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Family Satisfaction* consists of three main components – the use of SNSs, Leisure and Family satisfaction. These components and relationships between them were based on the model by Poff, Zabriskie, and Townsend (2010) but were further modified in the process of the study. The arrows between the use of SNSs, leisure and family satisfaction present the direction of the relationships reported by the participants of the study. Such modification of Poff’s et al. model was necessary since the

participants viewed their relationships with family members, their leisure and their use of technology not as clear-cut and linear as was suggested by their model, but rather as influenced by multiple factors, changed at different periods of time and counter-influencing each other. As it was previously discussed in the context of constraints theory (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997), concepts that explain human behavior are dynamic and rarely clear-cut. Thus, the Circular Model reflects the complexity of human relationships with technology, providing not linear, cause-effect influences, but rather multidirectional, circular interaction of the components.

Similarly to the Sociotechnological Model, the Circular Model represents bi-directional effects between the use of SNSs and family satisfaction. The participants of the study reported both positive and negative effects of SNSs use on family satisfaction, as well as family satisfaction on the use of SNSs. The relationship between the use of SNSs and family satisfaction was not always direct and, in certain cases, was mediated by leisure in the family. For instance, some of the family members who saw the detrimental effects of SNSs on their family leisure also reported their family satisfaction to decrease. The relationship among the SNS use, leisure and family satisfaction was influenced by a number of factors related to the individual characteristics of participants (e.g., their age, gender and ethnicity), family factors (e.g., stage of development and use of technology by family members), and characteristics of the technology itself.

The second model – the Circular Model of Interaction between SNS, Leisure, and Marital Satisfaction – focused on the relationships between the use of SNSs, Leisure and Marital Satisfaction. Similarly to the circular family satisfaction model, the use of SNSs influenced marital satisfaction either directly or through leisure as a mediator. However, contrary to the

circular family satisfaction model, this study did not produce sufficient amount of data to suggest a bidirectional relationship between marital satisfaction on the use of SNSs.

Similarly to the Sociotechnological Model (Lanigan, 2009), the new Circular Models include three main components (SNSs use, Leisure, Family/Marital Satisfaction) that are interdependent and are connected in a circular rather than linear way. The difference between the Circular Models and the Sociotechnological Model is the more specific focus of my models. While the Sociotechnological Model focuses on technology in general, the Circular Models discuss specific type of technology -- SNSs. Moreover, while the Sociotechnological Model includes multiple factors that explain relationships between family and technology, Circular Models focus on Leisure, SNSs, and Marital / Family satisfaction, while not excluding the possibility that each of these components might be additionally influenced and conditioned by a host of other factors that include individual and family traits and characteristics of social and physical environment. Lastly, the Sociotechnological Model does not indicate the direction of the relationships between its individual parts but rather combines all components in one group. The Circular Models, on the other hand, highlight the direction of the influences between components and potentially provide further ground for development of theory that can be tested with the use of quantitative methods.

While the Circular Models present three components (SNSs, Leisure and Family/Marital Satisfaction) and relationships between them, there is a need for further understanding of what factors lead to positive or negative outcomes of technology use. We also need to explore how external (employment, community, market) and internal (family size, family demographics, cultural differences) factors could modify Circular Model and further elaborate on the

relationships between technology (SNS), leisure and family / marital satisfaction.



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **7.1 Contributions of the Study**

The findings of this study provided important insights into the relationships between marriage/family, leisure and technology. Being very salient in modern society, both issues of technological progress and marital and family happiness are complex and dynamic, and require much deeper understanding than currently exists in the field of leisure studies. Besides focusing on a timely and novel topic, the methodological approach used in this project was also rather unique. As was suggested by Zabriskie and McCormick (2003), the role and the meaning of family leisure for adolescents could be best understood through the application of qualitative methods. This study used qualitative description methodology, based on the interpretivist and symbolic interactionism theoretical perspectives. The two specific methods used in this study – individual and family interview – have helped to obtain, understand and present the views of participants without imposing on them the expectations based on the previously existing research findings.

The study provided much needed addition to the literature on leisure and family satisfaction by examining family leisure through the eyes of adolescents (Christenson, Zabriskie, Eggett, & Freeman, 2006; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Since family is more than a sum of its components, there is a need for more information on how each member of the family experiences family leisure. Due to differences in developmental stages, motivations and abilities between different family members (Caldwell, Darling, Payne, & Dowdy, 1999; Larson, Gillman, & Richards, 1997) we should not assume that parents' perceptions of family leisure are identical

to the views of their children.

Another important benefit of this study is its multidisciplinary approach that has allowed me to draw resources from and make a contribution to the fields of leisure, family studies, and media studies. A need for research on the relationships between technology and family was suggested by Lanigan (2009) who stated that we know little about the effects technology has on family functioning, processes, communication, roles, and relationships. This study helped to start filling this gap in the field of media and family studies. Even more obvious is the gap in the leisure field, where, despite the significant influence technology has on recreation, studies on technology-based leisure are only beginning to appear. This study provided valuable information about the experiences of family members who use SNSs, their leisure and family and marital satisfaction.

## **7.2. Limitations of the Study**

Although this study provided an interesting contribution to the literature on leisure, family and marital satisfaction and technology, it has also raised a number of important questions and had certain limitations that need to be taken into account when evaluating its results. First, the data in this study were obtained through self-report which is often considered not very reliable. However, considering that the study was based on the assumptions of interpretivism and symbolic interactionism, self-report was a necessary way of data collection. Second, my involvement with the families was rather brief (one family interview and several individual interviews conducted during one day), which limited my ability to gain insights into their family life.

Third, it is impossible to make any generalizable statements based on the data obtained from seven families. Such generalizing is also complicated by the problems associated with recruiting families. Since at least three family members, including both parents, had to participate in the research project it was not easy for families to coordinate their schedules and thus, not many families were willing to participate. Due to that fact, the data collection stage of my study took longer than I initially planned and limited my opportunities to be more selective about my participants. For example, these difficulties with recruitment reduced my ability to select a group of participants sharing certain important characteristics (race/ethnicity, presence of small children, etc.). However, the sample was still rather homogeneous and represented a traditional family model – it did not include same-sex families or families in which one or more members had a disability. Moreover, the goal of this study was not to make generalizations about certain phenomena but rather to explore these phenomena, as well as to understand experiences of people who deal with them. The further studies can be designed to produce more generalizable findings.

The fourth limitation related to the previously discussed problem with recruitment, was the reduction in the amount of information provided by the families. While initially it was planned that families would complete a narrative diary to discuss their use of SNSs and their participation in family leisure, this stage of data collection had to be abandoned in order to reduce the amount of work required of participants.

Fifth, family interviews have some inherent limitations, especially when conducted with groups of people of different levels of power (such as children and parents, employers and employees etc.), as this power inequality may influence openness of some of the participants and

lead to certain people dominating the discussion (Bernard, 2000; Stewart et al., 2007). While it was noticeable in some families that adolescents were not very comfortable to share their thoughts in front of their parents, this limitation was still compensated by certain advantages that family interviews had to offer. Moreover, the adolescents were given the opportunity to express their thoughts in private during individual interviews.

The sixth limitation of the study was related to the fact that I belonged to a different ethnic and age group than the participants, as well as I did not have children of my own, which could have prevented some of the participants from developing trust and providing more open responses (Fontana & Frey, 1994). To overcome this problem, I presented myself as a “cordial-but-nonjudgmental” person who was curious and eager to learn about the participants’ authentic experiences (Bernad, 2000). I believe that in the majority of cases I was able to develop a sufficient level of rapport with my interviewees to obtain their candid answers. However, despite this rapport, some level of deference effect, social desirability effect and expectancy effect might have influenced the obtained data (Bernard, 2000). Discussing such intimate and emotionally charged topic as family and marital relationships, I believe many participants could desire to portray their relationships as healthy and happy. I also acknowledge the possibility that slight differences in wording, tone of voice or other non-verbal cues on my part could have created certain understanding among the participants of what my own standpoint on the discussed topics was. In such cases participants could have formed their responses in a way that would echo my own attitudes toward the issue.

### **7.3. Suggestions for Future Research**

While this study helped to explore a number of important and salient issues, there are still many topics that should be examined in more detail. Among the main suggestions for future research I would include studies on the development of family image through self-presentation on social network sites, as well as comparison of one's own family to the families of friends and relatives. It would be important to learn more about the effects such process of family identity development and comparison to other families has on satisfaction of different family members with their own leisure, family and marriage.

I would also encourage detailed investigations of changes in the perception of boundaries between members of the same family and between family and the outside digital world. Offering revolutionary new ways of communication, SNSs completely change the opportunities for flow of information between family members and between members of the family and the outside world. Considering fast pace with which those changes happen in the modern world, families face challenges they are unprepared for and they lack examples they can learn from. There is a significant need for research on potential factors that may negatively influence family and marital satisfaction, as well as general well-being of family members, related to on-line technologies such as cyber infidelity, stalking, bullying, and gambling addiction. These subjects, I believe, have not been sufficiently explored in leisure research.

Further research on how people's relationships with each other influence their usage of technology could also provide valuable information on the methods of coping through technology-based leisure. It would be important to further explore the different patterns of technology use by family members with different styles of interaction, different levels of conflict

in the family and different levels of family satisfaction. Moreover, various aspects of family relationships could be uncovered by conducting in-depth research on the effects of SNSs use on family leisure. Research on leisure in families with more addictive patterns of SNS use could shed light on more serious cases of family conflict and conflict resolution techniques. It would be also important to explore how addiction of different family members (parents vs. children) influences family relationships and well-being of specific family members. As was uncovered in this project, teenage children who reported the need to compete with technology for attention of their parents also had rather low levels of family satisfaction. It is important to explore whether technology use by their parents was the actual cause of such low levels of family satisfaction or if it was a result of more serious problems related to parent-child communication.

Lastly, I would suggest to further explore the differences and similarities in the perceptions of modern technology between people of different cultural backgrounds, age, gender, social status, level of ability and geographic location, as well as among less traditional families (same-sex, adoptive, and single-parent). While some research has been done on digital divide between people of different social classes, genders and age, the influence of technology is growing rapidly, which creates a dynamic environment that needs to be constantly re-visited and explored.

#### **7.4. Suggestions for Practitioners**

I believe that all research projects should lead to an improvement in the lives of people we are studying. Based on the findings of this study I would like to put forth several suggestions for practitioners in the field of leisure and family counseling. First, for the specialists in family

therapy I consider it to be very important to pay close attention to the relationships family members have with technology (specifically social network sites). I would suggest family counselors to remember that technology can lead to various disagreements, including those related to respecting each other's privacy, paying attention to the person one is talking to, discussing what information family as a unit wants to make public, negotiating what constitutes excessive technology use and how leisure time should be spent. Due to the relative novelty of SNS technology, counselors might need to help family members to work through the negotiation processes related to these issues. While technology does not have to be the cause of problems in the family, the conflicts related to technology could be an indicator of some deeper issues that undermine family well-being. At the same time, I would encourage family therapy specialists to remember about the potential positive contributions of technology (specifically SNSs) to family life, such as developing positive image (and potentially self-perception) of one's family, sharing common interests by creating shared profiles, developing a sense of belonging to something bigger than oneself, staying in touch with extended family members, using social network sites as an additional tool for courtship, and many others.

Second, it is also important to remember that relationships between counselor/therapist and family members also change in the modern technological environment. New forms of communication between these parties might influence the therapist's schedule (due to patients' expectation of constant availability) as well as dynamics of therapy sessions and techniques used by the therapists (e.g., consultation during critical moments in family relationships, ability of family members to think about and process previous therapy sessions, delivery of therapy sessions via new technology – skype, youtube, etc.). It would be important for the

counselors/therapists to develop their own set of expectations and limitations related to the use of technology that would be meaningful for them and their clients. Those rules and limitations should be discussed and agreed upon from the beginning of the therapy program.

Third, I would like to suggest that professionals in the leisure field should consider increasingly high levels of SNS use among members of different generations and different members of the same family. I believe it would be important to use technology to attract individuals and families who are heavy users of ICT to outdoor activities and various active leisure programs. However, it would also be crucial to ensure that modern technology is used as a tool to connect family members but does not become the dominant part of family leisure. Considering that the quality of interaction often depends on the level of attention people pay to each other, it is important to engage technology as a facilitator of family leisure and not as the main focus of interaction.

## **7.5. Concluding Thoughts**

To conclude, I would like to reflect on the journey I have traveled as a researcher during this study. Going through multiple stages of this research process (defining the topic and the objectives of the study, synthesizing the literature, deciding on the methodological approach, search for participants, data collection and finally data analysis) I have developed as an independent researcher and grown as an individual. I have further internalized and started practicing in everyday life the perspectives of idealism, constructionism, and interpretivism (symbolic interactionism), which helped me to develop into a more understanding person and a better citizen. Along the process I also realized that following the stands of these philosophies



might be very challenging and requires high level of responsibility and maturation. Unlike in positivism where the researcher is expected to be objective, idealism requires us to make hard choices since telling someone's story puts us in a position of a co-creator who lives through the experiences of participants, who internalizes their worries and their excitements. Such level of responsibility places researcher under high level of pressure and demands honesty, maturity and goodwill.

Besides these challenges, I have also learned that the process of conducting research among families requires a lot of patience and flexibility. Working with families the researcher always has to keep in mind that family is a unit of multiple people and, thus, there is always a potential for conflict, interdependence of attitudes, moods and perspectives, changes in schedules and other administrative details. Moreover, due to high value placed on family in our society, when discussing sensitive issues such as family and marital satisfaction, not many people are willing to share (or even admit to themselves) potential problems their families may face. Thus, a good researcher has to pay close attention not only to verbal responses of participants but also to non-verbal cues broadcasted by the family members to the outside world.

Lastly, going through the journey of this research project I realized that it is impossible to go through it on your own. While in most cases the researcher has to strive for independence and confidence, almost any stage of research can and should benefit from team work or an advice of an experienced colleague. I was fortunate to have a team of outstanding researchers helping me with advice and guidance through this challenging and valuable experience, who always supported and encouraged me while providing with constructive feedback, and who helped me to grow into a curious researcher and a better person.

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## Appendix A

Advertisement for e-week and Facebook

### **STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of social networking sites on families with teenage children.

#### **We are seeking:**

**(a) \*families with at least one adolescent child (13-17 years of age)**

**(c) at least one child and one parent should have a profile on a social network site (Facebook and/or MySpace, Twitter) and use it at least once a week.**

The project will require family members to write a diary for two days and to participate in one individual and one family interview. Your participation is highly appreciated and will be rewarded with a **\$20 gift card (one per family)**. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. The information collected will be held in strict confidence, and will not be provided to any outside entity. The researchers will not link your name to the information you provide in the diary or during the individual or family interview.

\* **Families** with different number, age, and gender of children and their parents (biological or adopting, married or cohabiting) are welcome to participate in the study.

If you are interested in participation, please contact:

Iryna Sharaievska

859 227-6408 (cell)

[sharaye1@illinois.edu](mailto:sharaye1@illinois.edu)



Appendix B

**Initial Screening Form  
Family and Marital Satisfaction and the use of Social Network Sites**

**Thank you very much for your interest in our study!**

We would appreciate if you could provide us with the following background information about your family:

a. Family composition:

- How many children live with you in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

- What are their genders and ages? \_\_\_\_\_

- Are any other family members residing with you in your household (e.g., grandparents, extended family members)? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Social network website use pattern:

- What social network website(s) do you, your spouse, and your adolescent child/children (13-18) use *at least once a week*?

Myself: \_\_\_\_\_

My spouse/significant other: \_\_\_\_\_

My children: \_\_\_\_\_

c. Demographic background:

- How would you describe socio-economic status of your family (working class, middle class, upper class)? \_\_\_\_\_

- How would you describe your race/ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_

d. Your family's willingness to participate in the study (please check mark if YES):

                    Yourself                      Your spouse/significant other                      Your child/children

Individual interview   \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_

Family interview       \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please note, all of the information provided in this background sheet will be kept confidential.\*\***

## Appendix C

### **Informed Consent Form for Parental and Child's Participation**

Dear Sir or Madam, Parent/Guardian:

My name is Iryna Sharaievska. I am a Graduate student at the University of Illinois working under the direction of Dr. Monika Stodolska from the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism. I am conducting a research study that is sponsored by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of the use of social networking sites on marital and family satisfaction. Yours and your child's participation is highly appreciated and will be rewarded with a \$30 gift card (one per family).

I really appreciate you and your child taking the time to share your experiences and perspectives with me. Your opinions will help me accurately represent the role of social networking sites in the lives of couples and their children. You, your spouse/partner and at least one of your children who are 13-17 years old will be asked to participate in two stages of the project: a family interview and an individual in-depth interview (individual interview will include completion of the Index of Marital Satisfaction scale (adults only) and Satisfaction with Family Life scale). Both the individual and family interview will be administered in your residence or in another place that is convenient for you. The expected length of the individual and family interview is approximately 20-40 minutes (30 minutes on average) each. Yours and your child's total time commitment should not exceed 2 hours per person.

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate nor are there any risks to participating beyond those that exist in everyday life. You and your child can decide whether or not you want to participate in this project. Some questions in this study may be sensitive to you and/or your child, such as whether or not you/he/she is satisfied with the leisure experiences in the family. Neither you nor your child have to answer any questions you don't wish to answer. You and your child are also free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. Refusal from participation or termination of your participation will not affect your relationship with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A copy of family and individual interview questions that your child will be asked are available for your review. Please, let me know if you wish to see them in advance.

In order to ensure that I accurately record your and your child's comments, I would like to audiotape the family and individual interview. The information collected will be kept strictly confidential and the only people who will have access to the family and individual interviews records are the members of the research team. The audio records will be destroyed as soon as the interview is transcribed (transcription will be completed within a 2 month period) and a pseudonym (fake name) will be used on any written notes and transcripts instead of your or your child's real name so that the interviews cannot be traced back to you. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet and will be retained indefinitely to permit comparisons with future studies of

family leisure and use of social network sites. Information obtained from the study (with the use of pseudonyms) will be included in my dissertation project, as well as may be published in an academic journals and book chapters, and presented at scholarly conferences. Although researchers will keep information reported during the family interview confidential and will ask that the other family members maintain confidentiality, due to the nature of family interview confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

A benefit to you and your child from participation in this project is the opportunity to openly discuss and reflect on the use of social networking sites by members of your family, as well as your family leisure experiences in a confidential venue. A broader benefit of your and your child's participation is that it will help us better understand the leisure of families in contemporary world. This may help many other families who have similar experiences and face similar problems. The findings of this study may be used to develop recommendations for family counselors and families themselves in order to improve their marital and family satisfaction and overall wellbeing.

I sincerely thank you for your help with this study. If you would like to receive a copy of the results or if you have any questions or comments, please contact me or Dr. Stodolska at:

Mrs. Iryna Sharaievska  
Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
104 Huff Hall, 1206 S. Fourth Street  
Champaign, IL 61820

Email: [sharaye1@illinois.edu](mailto:sharaye1@illinois.edu)  
Phone: 859-227-6408

Dr. Monika Stodolska  
Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
104 Huff Hall, 1206 S. Fourth Street  
Champaign, IL 61820

Email: [stodolsk@illinois.edu](mailto:stodolsk@illinois.edu)  
Phone: 217-244-5644

You will be provided with a copy of the Informed Consent Letter.

If you have any further questions regarding your or your child's rights as project participants you may contact University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at (217) 333-2670 (collect) or by email at [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu). The Institutional Review Board is the office at the University of Illinois responsible for protecting the rights of human subjects involved in studies conducted by the University of Illinois researchers.

By placing a check in the spaces below:

I certify that I'm at least 18 years of age:  Yes  No

I have read and understood the information on this form.  Yes  No

I have had the information on this form explained to me.  Yes  No

I grant permission for my interview to be audiorecorded.  Yes  No

I grant permission for my family interview to be audiorecorded.  Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you decide to allow your child to participate in this study, please sign below, thus indicating that we have parental permission to include your child in the research project. The decision to allow your child to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your child's relations with the University of Illinois. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records. We thank you very much in advance for your consideration. **I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my child's participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to allow my child to participate in the:**

family interview  Yes  No

individual interview  Yes  No

I agree to have my child recorded during the interview  Yes  No

I agree to have my child recorded during the family interview  Yes  No

I have received a copy of this letter.  Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of parent/legal guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed name of parent/legal guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed name of child participant)

Appendix D

**Minor Informed Assent Form**

Project Title: Family and marital satisfaction and the use of social network sites

Name of Principal Investigator: Iryna Sharaievska

Investigator's Adviser: Dr. Monika Stodolska

I am being invited to participate in an individual and family interviews (i.e., an interview conducted with my family – my parents, my siblings who are 13-17 years old, and myself) that asks questions about how I use my Facebook/MySpace/Twitter profile, how I spend my free time with my parents, and how my free time and my relationship with parents are affected by my use of Facebook/MySpace/Twitter. Individual and family interviews will last about 30 min. each. Even though my parents have said that I, \_\_\_\_\_, can participate in this study, I know that I can still say no without getting into any trouble. There are no right or wrong answers in the individual and family interviews.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I know I can skip questions I choose not to answer and I can decide to stop participating in the project at any time. If I choose to skip questions or decide that I don't want to participate in the project at all, nothing bad will happen to me.

I know that I will be recorded in these individual and family interviews and that I can say no if I do not want to be recorded on audio recorder. I know that I can still participate even if I don't want to be recorded, and I can just tell the person doing the interview that I don't want to be recorded. Also, I know that what I will say in the interview will be kept confidential and that no one will be able to trace what I said to me. I also understand that what I will say during the family interviews will be heard by other family members and can become known to other people (however, the person conducting interviews will ask everyone not to share the information with anyone). I know that what I will say during the study (with the use of pseudonyms) will be included in Iryna Sharaievska's dissertation project, as well as may be published in an academic journals and books, and/or presented at scholarly conferences.

I know that my family will receive \$30 gift card.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

I agree to be recorded in the interview

I do not want to be recorded in the interview

I agree to be recorded in the family interview       I do not want to be recorded in the family interview

If you have any questions about the study you may contact me at 859-227-6408 or [sharaye1@illinois.edu](mailto:sharaye1@illinois.edu) or Dr. Monika Stodolska at 217-244-5644 or [stodolsk@illinois.edu](mailto:stodolsk@illinois.edu). If you have any questions about your rights in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as the research participant) or via email at [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu).

## Appendix E

### **Family Interview Script**

#### *Family and couple leisure:*

- a. Could you tell me more about your leisure as a family/ a couple: what are your most favorite activities and why?
- b. Besides taking part in leisure activities you like the most, what else do you do for fun together, as a family?
- c. What are the most enjoyable family activities you participate in? What makes them most enjoyable?
- d. What are the least enjoyable family activities you participate in? What makes them least enjoyable / more bothersome?
- e. How important is it for you to spend time together, as a family/ as a couple? Do you usually plan such time for each week in advance or do you decide to spend time together more spontaneously?
  - If scheduled – do you always try to make sure you spend this time together or do your work/ school/ other responsibilities sometimes prevent you from spending free time together?
  - If spontaneous – how often do you come up with ideas to do things for fun together as a family? Are all of you equally willing to make time to spend leisure time together?

#### *SNS use in the family:*

- e. Could you tell me how different members of your family use SNS?

- Are some of you more familiar with SNSs than others? How long have you been using SNS and which sites are you currently using?
- Do you ever spend time together on SNSs?
  - f. Do you have any rules as a family/ as a couple about the use of SNSs: when, where, for how long, by whom, for what reasons SNSs can and cannot be used?  
Do you all agree on these rules or do any of you feel that these rules are not fair?  
If so, what exactly is unfair about them?
  - g. How do you try to protect your privacy on SNSs?
  - h. Do you have any disagreements related to the protection of your family privacy on SNSs?
- Have you ever had any disagreements with your children/ parents/ spouse on what information may or may not be shared on SNSs (information about trips, anniversaries, posting of certain pictures, home address, etc.)?
- Have you ever had any other disagreements related to the use of SNSs?



## Appendix F

### **Individual Interview Script (adults)**

#### *Family leisure pattern and pattern of SNSs use:*

1. What do you do for leisure as a family?
2. How much time do you spend on family leisure?
3. How much time do you spend on SNS on average per day / week?
4. How many profiles do you have on SNSs and how many “friends” on each of these profiles do you have? What are the reasons for you to have multiple profiles? Do you happen to have a “family” profile?
5. Why do you use SNSs (for leisure/non-leisure, to communicate with friends or family, to express yourself or learn about others)?
6. Do you check each other’s profiles in the family? Do you have access to the profiles of your spouse / children?

#### *Satisfaction with leisure:*

1. What do you find satisfying in your family / couple leisure?
2. What are the things in your family / couple leisure that bother you?
3. Is there anything you would like to improve in your leisure as a family / couple?  
- If so, how? Would you like to have more time shared with your family / spouse? Or would you like to improve quality of your shared time? Or both?

#### *Effect of SNSs use on family leisure and satisfaction with family leisure:*

1. Does your use of SNSs in any way affect your participation in family leisure? For

example:

- Do you get some ideas about the activities to do as a family from your friends and relatives?
- Do you take more pictures during your leisure time to share them with your “friends” on your profile?
- Do you spend less time with your family because you prefer to communicate with your “friends” online?
  2. Do you think the use of SNSs by other family members affects your leisure as a family / as a couple? If so, could you explain how?
  3. Do you usually use SNSs by yourself or do you sometimes participate in this activity with your spouse / children? Could you give me examples of what SNS activities do you do with your spouse / children?
  4. Do you ever use SNS while spending time with your family / spouse? What about other members of your family?
    - If so, do you ever find yourself or other members of your family to be consumed by events/posts on SNSs rather than by leisure activity your family is involved in at that time?
    - If so, does that bother you or members of your family (spouse, children)?
  5. Do you consciously make an effort to exclude SNSs from your family time and/or leisure that you spend as a family / couple (e.g., do not check your cell phone, do not take your laptop with you, only check your ICT device for work purposes but do not read/respond to posts on SNSs)?

*Effect of SNSs use on family and marital satisfaction:*

1. Do your spouse / children sometimes complain about your excessive use of SNSs?

- If so, how do you respond to their complaints? How do you feel about it?

2. How do you think your use of SNSs affects your family satisfaction?
3. How do you think your use of SNSs affects your marital satisfaction?
4. How does the use of SNSs by your husband / wife / children affect your family satisfaction?
5. How does the use of SNSs by your husband / wife affect your marital satisfaction?
6. Do you think your relationships with your spouse / child in any way affect how much you use SNSs and what exactly do you do while using it? If so, in what way?

*Satisfaction with Family Life Scale (SWFL) – Zabriskie and McCormick's (2003)*

(Adopted from the Satisfaction With Life Scale by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)

1. In most ways my family life is close to ideal.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---------------------	-------------------	---------	----------------	------------------	----------------

2. The conditions of my family life are excellent.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---------------------	-------------------	---------	----------------	------------------	----------------

3. I am satisfied with my family life.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---------------------	-------------------	---------	----------------	------------------	----------------

4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in my family life.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---------------------	-------------------	---------	----------------	------------------	----------------

5. If I could live my family life over, I would change almost nothing.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
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*The Index of Marital Satisfaction – Orthner (1975)*

1. In general, how often do you think things between you and your husband (wife) are going well?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------------

2. Have you ever considered separation from your mate?

Seriously	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Have never considered
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3. Everything considered, how happy has your marriage been for you?

Decidedly unhappy	Relatively unhappy	Undecided	Relatively happy	Decidedly happy
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4. If you had your life to live over, do you think you would marry the same person?

Would not marry at all	Probably would not marry	Undecided	Probably would marry	Certainly marry
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## Appendix G

### **Individual Interview Script (children)**

#### *Family leisure pattern and pattern of SNSs use:*

1. What do you do in your free time as a family?
  2. How much time do you spend with your family doing something fun?
  3. How much time do you spend on SNS on average per day / week?
  4. How many profiles do you have on SNSs?
- How many “friends” on each of these profiles do you have?
  - Why do you to have several profiles?
  - Do you happen to have a “family” profile?
5. Why do you use SNSs (for leisure/non-leisure, to communicate with friends or family, to express yourself or learn about others)?
  6. Do you have access to the profiles of your parents/siblings? Do they check your profiles?

#### *Satisfaction with leisure:*

1. Could you tell me what do you like the most about the time you spend with your family?
  2. What are the things in your family time that bother you / that you don't like?
  3. Is there anything you would like to improve in your family leisure?
- If so, how? Would you like to spend more time with your family? What else would you like to change?

#### *Effect of SNSs use on family leisure and satisfaction with family leisure:*

1. Do you think your use of SNSs in any way affects your participation in family leisure?

For example:

- Do you get some ideas about what to do with your family from your friends and relatives?

- Do you take more pictures during your leisure time to share them with your “friends” on your profile?

- Do you spend less time with your family (parents and/or siblings) because you prefer to communicate with your “friends” online?

2. Do you think the use of SNSs by your parents affects your leisure as a family? If so, could you explain how? For example, does that affect how much time you spend together?

3. Do you usually use SNS by yourself or do you sometimes do it with your parents or siblings? Could you give me examples of what do you do on SNSs with your parents or siblings?

4. Do you ever use SNSs while spending time with your family? What about other members of your family?

- If so, are SNSs more interesting for you than things you do with your parents at that time?

- Are your parents ever more interested in what happens on SNSs than in what you are doing together?

- If so, does that bother you or your parents?

5. Do you ever decide not to check your SNSs while spending time with your family (parents and/or siblings)?

6. Do your parents put any restrictions on your use of SNSs? If so, what are they? How do you feel about them?

*Effect of SNSs use on family satisfaction:*

4. Do your parents sometimes complain that you are using SNS too much?  
- If so, how do you respond to their complaints? How do you feel about it?
5. How do you think your use of SNSs affects your family satisfaction?
6. How does the use of SNSs by your parents affect your family satisfaction?
4. Do you think your relationships with your parents and siblings in any way affects how much you use SNSs and what exactly do you do using it? If so, in what way?

*Satisfaction with Family Life Scale (SWFL) – Zabriskie and McCormick's (2003)*

(Adopted from the Satisfaction With Life Scale by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)

1. In most ways my family life is close to ideal.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
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2. The conditions of my family life are excellent.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
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3. I am satisfied with my family life.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
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4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in my family life.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
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5. If I could live my family life over, I would change almost nothing.

Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly Agree
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