Practices and meaning of purposive family leisure among working and middle class families

Running title: Purposive Leisure in the Family (31 character spaces)

Dr. Maureen Harrington
Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management
Griffith University, Nathan, Qld 4111, Australia

Note on Contributor

Maureen Harrington, PhD (Sociology, Calif.) is an Adjunct Senior Lecturer in the Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia. Her research areas include volunteering in sport; women's work, leisure and family lives and gender and family leisure. Her current research is in the area of fly in, fly out mining services work, well-being and family leisure.

Dr. Maureen Harrington
Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management
Griffith University
Nathan Queensland 4111 Australia
Fax (617) 3735 6743
M.Harrington@griffith.edu.au

Practices and meaning of purposive family leisure among working and middle class families

This article explores the relationship between purposive family leisure and social class in Australian families. A brief review of family leisure literature is followed by a review of conceptual developments in family sociology and the new sociology of class in order to build a richer conceptual and theoretical base for exploring purposive family leisure. Qualitative data is reported from semi-structured interviews with parents in 28 working and middle class families in Brisbane, Australia. An analysis of family leisure practices show differences in what constitutes family leisure and its display. Moreover, parents' stated intentions for engaging in family leisure practices suggest that there is a classed dimension to purposive leisure in that working and middle class parents emphasize different values and imagined futures for their children.

Keywords: family practices, family display, family leisure, purposive leisure, class

Introduction

Researchers have studied family leisure since Leisure Studies first emerged in the 1970s. Two of the best known early studies are the social-psychological work of Rapoport and Rapoport (1975) on the family life cycle and Young and Wilmott's (1973) institutional approach to the 'symmetrical family'. With a focus on the marital couple, most studies of family leisure made positive claims about shared leisure contributing to family stability, interaction and satisfaction (see for example, Orthner, 1975, 1985; Orthner and Mancini, 1980, 1991; Holman and Epperson, 1984; and Hill, 1988). As in social science more broadly, leisure researchers assumed 'the family' was a hetero-normative, two-parent nuclear family without reference to social class, religion, geographical location, or ethnic identity. Feminist sociology challenged the normative notion of the nuclear family (Smith, 1993) and contemporary family sociology recognises diversity in family life (Hill, 2012; Chambers, 2012). Family leisure researchers also acknowledge the influence of ethnic, racial, religious, class and sexual identities on family life and leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 1998; Rehman, 2001; Willming & Gibson, 2000; Bialeschki and Pearce, 1997), but have not really explored how diverse families practice and value family leisure. Shaw (2010) discussed implications of diversity in Canadian families for both family

leisure and personal leisure and the tensions between them, but the empirical work remains to be done¹.

One source of diversity in families is social class and this article looks at purposive family leisure through the prism of social class, because social class is pivotal to understanding what matters to families and how they live. To use the term introduced to Leisure Studies by Watson and Scraton (2013), class is 'intersectional' rather than 'additive' to gender, race, ethnicity and other sources of diversity that influence family life and leisure. The research question posed is, why do working- and middle-class parents engage in family leisure and are there classed differences in their practices and intentions?

This article reviews contemporary literature on family leisure and proposes that family leisure research consider the relevance of recent conceptual approaches in family sociology and the new sociology of class. Next, it reports on a qualitative study of family leisure on 28 Brisbane, Queensland families. Third, it demonstrates how conceptualizing 'families' and 'social class' in the proposed ways can inform an interpretive analysis of the data in the study. The article concludes with a discussion of how introducing these concepts may lead to more understanding of diversity in family leisure.

Purposive Family Leisure

Shaw and Dawson (1998, 2001) researched family leisure using time-use diaries and interviews with members of 31 families in Ottawa and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. They coined the term 'purposive leisure' for the meaning parents attach to shared family leisure activity. Shaw and Dawson (2001) found that family leisure was highly valued by parents and they show 'a strong sense of purpose' (p. 223) in its accomplishment. Parents described their resolve and effort to organize and facilitate family leisure activities for the good of their children.

The authors explained that family leisure seemed to be ‘purposive’ to the achievement of two broad and complementary parental goals. In the short term, parents see engaging in family leisure as a way of enhancing the family as a cohesive, communicative and bonded unit, to give its members “a sense of family” and “memories of having good times together” (Shaw & Dawson, 2001, p. 224). Over the longer term, parents want to provide their children with opportunities to develop healthy lifestyle patterns and to learn values that parents hope will serve them throughout life. Shared family leisure offers opportunities for children to learn moral and life lessons “through doing and seeing rather than being told what to do” by parents (Shaw & Dawson, 2001, p. 226).

Until now, ‘purposive leisure’ (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Harrington, 2006b; Such, 2006) has not been theorized in a way that enables inquiry of how family leisure may be mediated by class and other socio-cultural processes. Shaw and Dawson (1998, 2001) did not examine class differences in the practices and meaning of purposive leisure nor in the values transmitted through it. However, other researchers who foreground class in family life, particularly in the area of parenting practices, may offer some guidance. In Plantin (2007)’s work on fatherhood in Sweden, working-class fathers saw fatherhood as “natural, well-known and predictable” (Plantin, 2007:104) and they married and had children at a young age. They had traditional values and norms and were taught (and no doubt taught their children) to “do their best...stand in line and never stick out” (Plantin 2007: 104). The middle-class fathers found fatherhood to be “a reflexive project” (Plantin, 2007:106) which transformed their career-driven self-image into seeing themselves as more rounded, with family life taking on new meaning. They subscribed to values of successful achievement, captured by the mottoes “alone is strong” and “to be all-

sufficient” (Åström, 1990 cited in Plantin, 2007:106). Plantin’s work suggests different values and identities around parenting for fathers in different classes.

Another sign of how purposive leisure may be mediated by class comes from Lareau’s (2000, 2002, 2003) work on parenting practices in the U.S. She found both white and black parents have distinct perceptions of the nature of childhood and position themselves in their children’s lives differently depending on their social class. Lareau (2002, p. 748) devised the terms ‘concerted cultivation’ and ‘the accomplishment of natural growth’ for two dissimilar childrearing strategies used by middle-class and working-class/poor families. She found middle-class parents provided their children an array of organized leisure and sport activities that parents believed would equip them with life-long skills. In working-class and poor families, children had few organised activities but instead made their own pastimes within limits established by parents. They had “more free time and deeper, richer ties within their extended family” (Lareau, 2002:749). Lareau concluded that the class differences in values and the “cultural logic of childrearing” (2002:748) lead to divergent paths for children: “an emerging sense of entitlement” among children raised by middle-class parents and “an emerging sense of constraint” (2002:749) for children of working class and poor parents.

Neither Plantin (2007) nor Lareau (2000, 2002, 2003) refer to family leisure nor do they discuss shared leisure activities between parents and children. However their work on class-based values and meanings of parenting raises an important question for our understanding of class mediated purposive leisure. If middle and working class parents are trying to realise different outcomes for their children (i.e., lifelong values and life-skills for success among the middle class and close bonded family ties among the working and lower class), are these not the two goals of purposive leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 2001)? Is it possible that middle and working class

parents purport to arrive at different ends for their children through family leisure? This question will be addressed through analysing qualitative data on family leisure with the application of new concepts from family sociology and the new sociology of class.

Family Practices and Displaying Family

Morgan (1996, 2011) shifted thinking from the institutional and legal concept of ‘the family’ to a concept of ‘family practices’ giving a sense of the active, everyday, regular, fluid nature of family life (Morgan, 2011). He gives two meanings to ‘everyday’, in the sense of life-events affecting large sections of the population at any one time, and ‘everyday’ routine activities. Morgan’s (2011) examples of life-events include family celebrations of birthdays, degree ceremonies and weddings, and most of his examples of routine family practices are family leisure activities, like “watching TV” (p. 59), “the family meal” (p. 101) and “a father deciding to take a child for a walk in the park” (p.113). Morgan defines “family practices” as “... not simply practices that are done in relation to other family members but they are also constitutive of that family ‘membership’ at the same time” (2011, p. 32). His work underscores the “*performativity* of family life in general” (Chambers, 2012:42; italics in the original). In the same way, family members ‘doing’ family leisure constitute family leisure practices. Morgan argued that family practices overlap with gendered, classed, ethnic, working and consumption practices which he sees as “one of its distinctive strengths” (Morgan, 2011, p. 159), insisting that family practices can be viewed through many lenses. In extending Morgan’s ideas about “‘doing’ family things” rather than “‘being’ a family” (2007:66), Finch tenders a new concept ‘displaying family’ that builds upon the idea of performativity of family life. She explains how family is enacted in various social settings where individuals “‘constitute certain actions and activities as ‘family practices’” (Finch, 2007, p. 66) and see themselves and can be seen by

significant others as doing ‘family things’, hence her term ‘displaying families’. Later Morgan (2011) suggests extending ‘displaying families’ to research on the “overlap between class practices and family practices using the idea of display” (p. 63). Families show themselves and others see them in a certain light by virtue of their family practices. The data analysis reported below will demonstrate the use of these conceptual tools for studying family leisure. These concepts, along with a cultural concept of ‘class’ from the new sociology of class, introduced in a following section, inform the qualitative analysis of purposive family leisure as mediated by class reported below.

A Cultural Concept of Class for Family Research

Sociologists would agree most people do not embrace social class as a collective identity in everyday life, although it still surfaces in national political debate (Bottero, 2004). Proponents of the ‘new sociology of class’ claim that social hierarchy is reproduced through “the classed nature of particular social and cultural processes” (Bottero, 2004 p. 989). This cultural concept of class emerged from the virulent ‘end of class’ debates of the early 1990s. Class analysis had fallen out of fashion after Giddens (1990; 1991; 1998) and Beck (1992) theorized that ‘reflexive modernisation’ had transformed industrial society. They argued that a globalized economy rewarding the ability of individual social actors to reflexively negotiate and manage risk and opportunities marked the advent of late modernity. Individuals embark on a ‘reflexive project of the self’ (Giddens, 1990; 1991) through which they construct their identities, creating and recreating their autobiography, and in the process cut traditional ties to family, social class and geographic locality. This is the ‘individualization thesis’. According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, the rise of individualization ends the need for concepts such as family and class, declared ‘zombie categories’ (2002, p. 203; cf. Gillies, 2005, p. 841). They argued class is no

longer relevant for explaining inequality and social relations, nor as a source of personal or group identity (Gillies, 2005; see also Atkinson, 2007).

In spite of proponents of reflexive modernity relegating class to obscurity, for advocates of a ‘new sociology of class’ it remains a critical concept for understanding social inequality. Gillies (2005) explains that class has been culturally reconstructed “from a structural category to a form of subjectivity” (p.836) which has focussed attention on childrearing practices. She is particularly unsympathetic to the ‘reflective project of the self’ thesis that blames working-class people for failing to overcome structural barriers and constraints in order to raise middle class children who are “agentic, reflexive self[ves]” (Gillies, 2005, p. 840). This latter point is relevant to a critical analysis of family leisure practices because theorists of the new sociology of class link ‘good’ -- read middle-class, parenting practices to educational and employment outcomes of children. Valuing educational success includes encouraging and facilitating sport activities as ‘healthy leisure pursuit[s]’ (Devine, 2004, p. 101). Sport, music and other ‘healthy’ leisure activities outside of school is less affordable for working-class families (Chin & Philips, 2004) even though they may value those opportunities. Moreover children’s interest in sport, music or other leisure pursuits can form the basis of shared family leisure interests (Devine, 2004) or ‘purposive leisure’ (Shaw & Dawson 2001) done for the sake of the children. Middle class parents are able to give their children advantages mainly through mobilising their material and cultural resources for education and purposive leisure. Their inclination to do so is pertinent to this study of purposive family leisure.

The Brisbane Family Leisure Study

The vernacular ‘low income’ and middle income’ was used in recruiting families for the study introduced here, rather than ‘working class’ and ‘middle class’ since that is how

Australians refer to class, outside of the ‘class wars’ in national political debate (Bottero, 2004). The broad research question posed is whether purposive family leisure is classed? More specifically, three research questions are addressed: are family leisure practices classed? Are some family leisure practices occasions for displaying family? Are the reasons lower- and middle- income families engage in purposive family leisure similar or different?

A research assistant collected data from a purposive sample of 28 middle- and working-class two-parent heterosexual families living in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia in 1999 and 2004 as research funds came available. Parents kept a leisure activity diary for seven days to inform the interviews with each parent about what family leisure means to them. The semi-structured interviews focussed on how important they consider family leisure and what benefits they want their children to derive from it. Children ten years and older were also interviewed about their leisure activities and what ‘doing things’ with their parents meant to them.

Study Method

The research design was a replication of Shaw and Dawson’s (1998) study in Ontario, Canada², using the same diary: diary-interview method (Zimmerman & Weider, 1977) and interview schedule as Shaw and Dawson (1998), but redesigned to sample ‘middle-income’ and ‘lower-income’ families. Two-parent families were recruited from a children’s soccer club which yielded 10 families for study, and 20 more prospective families were found through a community newspaper ad. The 28 families accepted into the study gave informed consent and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. One criteria for inclusion in the study was family income falling below \$25,000 (fourth decile of national income levels) or above \$30,000³ (fifth decile) for a distinction between lower- and middle-income levels.

Sample

Families with a net household income between \$30,001 and \$60,000 were designated 'middle-income' and those whose net income fell between \$20,000 and \$24,999 as 'lower-income' which, as explained, are the preferred referents for working- and middle-class in the Australian cultural context. The majority of families were Anglo-Celtic and five families identified with another ethnicity: a Maori father in one lower income family, a Polynesian-Native American father in a middle income family, two families from the Philippines (one lower income and one middle income), and a middle income Israeli family. The children in the sixteen middle-income families ranged in age from 10 weeks to 20 years, with between two and four children in each family (an average of 2.5 children per family). In these families, one or both parents worked in occupational areas ranging from management consultancies, public service, education, health, small business and licensed trades. Two of the mothers were homemakers and another was on maternity leave. These families comprised 72 individuals. The twelve lower-income families in the study had children ranging in age from 8 months to 25 years old, with between three and seven children in each family (an average of 3.5 children per family). One or both parents worked in manual and service jobs such as casual banquet work, industrial cleaning, mail sorting, gardening, part-time reception work, and four mothers were full-time homemakers. There were 66 individuals in the lower-income families.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study used seven-day diaries to gather qualitative information on actual practices and events to guide semi-structured interviews, that probed the meaning of those practices and events and the circumstances that surrounded them (Zimmerman & Weider, 1977). The interviews were taped and later transcribed. Each transcript was open coded, then through an iterative process the interview data was organised into axial codes. Next through selective coding these codes were

then reorganized into discursive themes that emerged from the interview material (see Strauss, 1987; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2000)

Findings

Common Family Leisure Practices

This section draws out themes from the data analysis to develop more understanding of the classed nature of purposive family leisure, starting with some descriptive examples of family leisure practices. As expected, families engaged in a range of family leisure practices, and both lower--and middle-income families recorded some of the same activities. One that figured prominently was watching television even though most respondents considered it a negative experience (see also Shaw & Dawson, 2003). For example, a father in a lower-income family stated: *“watching TV's probably the least important [family leisure activity] yeah”* (Family #12). A middle-income father was more communicative about why it was his least enjoyable family leisure activity: *It's the television programs that you don't really choose to watch. If [I] were really disciplined, I'd go through the program each week and mark what I wanted to watch and be disciplined and watch them rather than vegge out in front of the television”* (Family #10). Fathers in both groups called watching TV *“vegging out,”* explaining they are too tired to do anything else after work. A lower-income mother admitted: *“I do watch a lot of TV when I am at home”* (Family #8). In an example of a gendered practice of ‘time-deepening’ (Godbey, 1994:243) a middle-income mother explains: *“I might be watching TV but I'll also be ironing so it's not so much leisure but it's sort of a feeling of doing something that's not study or work but still getting stuff done in the house”* (Family #20). So watching television is a low priority but common family leisure practice that becomes a default option for many lower- and middle-income families.

Classed Family Leisure Practices in Lower-income Families

While both groups reported watching television, across the interviews there were distinctive patterns of classed family practices (Morgan, 1996, 2011). One of these patterns was the efforts made by lower-income parents to engage in purposive family leisure that was inexpensive yet enjoyable for the whole family. Consider the following examples described by a mother with seven children in a lower-income family:

'Well we drive around sometimes, just for a drive like, [my husband] likes looking at houses (laughs) So every now and again we'll drive around and we'll see a park and we'll go 'we'll have to come here on Sunday'. And, yeah, we enjoy...I mean it doesn't cost anything and that's our main thing.' (Family #13)

She later described a family practice for celebrating a 'life-event' (Morgan, 2011) of children's birthdays:

I don't give the kids a birthday party every year but like [daughter] when she turned 13 she had a sleepover and [son] will have one next year because he'll be 13 next year. For special, like, birthdays ...I don't give them birthday parties every year but every year I give two of them a birthday party. Like two of them will get a birthday party and the others won't and I just rotate so that everybody has a birthday party but not on the same year (Family #13)

Another mother with three children in a lower-income family describes a similar preference for low or no-cost leisure practices that everyone can enjoy:

I like to go to Southbank [Parklands]. We usually spend nearly all summer there. It's just nice, you know, the kids can swim. We can swim, we just have BBQ's and just relax and go for walks along the riverbank And it's just really nice and it's free. (Family #14)

A further example of no-cost classed family leisure practices that promotes family togetherness comes from a lower-income father of three:

When we have a family games night or games day that's important. Like monopoly and we can do that for an hour until the kids get fed up and fight over it, or a couple of hours depending on how it's going. That's important, I like that. We're a family together, and we're not going out spending money and we're sitting here doing it on the cheap and we're having quality time together. (Family #5)

The common aim of these various family leisure practices is purposive leisure, achieving family togetherness with little or no cost involved. However, lower-income parents did not

always link family togetherness and low cost family leisure practices. One lower-income father of four in family #18 could only think of one leisure practice the family did together: *"I suppose meals together [are] a leisure activity. Just for the family interaction. It's one time when everybody's together."* Another example of the importance of family togetherness comes from a mother in Family #12 who objected to her daughter going to the gym because it took her away from the family: *"I just think it's important for all of us to do a lot of things together as a family. Rather than like... [daughter] went off for three hours at a time on her own. She quite often didn't have tea with the family."* Keeping the family together will return as a theme in a later subsection when lower-income parents talk about what they value about family leisure.

Classed Family Leisure Practices in Middle-income Families

The excerpts shown above stand in contrast to an array of family leisure practices of middle-income families where no cost is mentioned nor is family togetherness seen as an endpoint. Parents instead describe practices that are purposive to giving the children experiences that will build character, develop skills and reinforce healthy habits. A telling example is from a family of Israeli migrants with no extended family in Australia, who want to make sure their children gain independent lives:

We go and meet friends, we go picnicking with friends, we organize community activities because it is very important to me that my kids will be in a community doing things together with other kids. Because we are so dependent on each other it is very important to me that they will have friends, have social lives, do activities out of the house, not just with us. (Mother, middle-income family #29)

She wants her children (aged 15, 8 and 3) to have friends outside the nuclear family because of the social skills and 'flexibility' it teaches them:

I want them to have social skills. I want them to know themselves, to know what they like and in order to do that I have to expose them to a lot of activities...I really really want them to have to be very rich in their experiences and very flexible. Because I think flexibility is the thing that will make them strong when they grow up. (Mother, middle-income family #29)

To use Lareau's (2000, 2002) concept, she is practising 'concerted cultivation' in her parenting, being clear about what she wants her children to be exposed to growing up.

Many of the middle-income parents describe active leisure as a prominent part of their family leisure practices; the following few excerpts represent many other accounts of similar kinds of active outdoor family recreation. For example, a mother in a family of three sons (aged 12, 10 and 2) described their 'free-time activities' lately:

We have different sort of things that we do, like, we would go to a basketball game with [husband] or we'd go to the swimming carnival...or a new thing at the moment is wanting to go hiking as a family and rockclimbing and stuff like that. (Mother, middle-income family #19)

Another middle-income mother comments on spending family leisure time with her husband's family and their commitment to a healthy lifestyle: *"when we do meet up we generally have some sort of physical activity whether it is beach or going for bushwalks so there is that side of thing too. They are very involved in keeping healthy and fit"* (Family #3). Valuing healthy and active lifestyle practices was taken-for-granted in many of the interviews with middle-income parents.

For another family, trips away for holidays were routine:

We usually go to Caloundra at least once a year and for the other holidays it could be to Girraween National Park and last holiday we went up to the Whitsundays. We are going to Caloundra in June and [husband] is going to take [12-year old son] to Fraser Island and has put in for September holidays. (Mother, middle-income family #1)

This mother looked for purposive holiday activities that gave health benefits like *"camping, bushwalking, surfing and walking along the beach"*.

Purposive family leisure is apparent when a middle-income mother draws a distinction between the educational family leisure practices their family engages in and choices 'other' families make: *"we'll often do something that's educational in nature. Museum. Particular types of movies. Particular types of books. Outings to the library. That sort of thing. Yeah, we*

tend not to be, sort of, theme park goers" (Family #20). Distinguishing her family practices from those of other families leads me into a discussion of examples of family display (Finch, 2007).

Displaying Families

Finch (2007) explored ideas around the ways in which family life can be performative, in that some parents feel the need to see themselves and for others to see them in a particular light that displays the kind of family they are. Morgan (2011) pointed out how displaying families occurs with the overlap between class and family practices. As an example of Finch's (2007) 'displaying families', a swim club forms the basis for shared family leisure for a middle income family with three sons. The mother describes their highly visible involvement:

...well [husband] and I are carnival selectors for the swimming club and organised the club championships last year and we're going to do that again next year...I think you get more out of it, the more you put in, you know. It's not any sort of martyr thing.....somebody's got to do it otherwise the club wouldn't run. Probably some of it might be a bit guilt sort of.....you know, I think we feel we should, you know, we've been in the club for a few years. Really, we looked at maybe [husband] being president this year, and umm, cause our kids do get a lot of trophies and medals and things....(Mother, middle-income family #11).

Note how she mentions the sons' rewards for swimming prowess in the way of trophies and medals -- reminiscent of Gillies' (2005) observation that only middle-class parents talk about their 'talented' children.

When asked why holidays are important to her family, the mother in Family #10 displays a 'well-travelled' family:

They are very new experiences. We do lots of travelling and do camping holidays. We've been to Dubbo, Adelaide, Sydney, Cairns. We drive, we have been on a train and sometimes we go with friends on the bigger trips. We go with [a friend] and [her husband] and other friends who have three boys on the further afield trips like Cairns, Sydney and Adelaide. We do camping trips with [another family]....Everyone living very closely together and managing to survive very closely together. (Mother, middle-income family #10)

Finally, the following excerpt is a classed family leisure practice with an element of display (Finch, 2007) because it describes a healthy and active family activity followed by the

widespread but culturally less-valued sedentary activity, watching television, with the message that ‘our family does good, constructive leisure activities together’:

We bike ride at Shaw Road Park and sometimes we go with a few other families to Kalinga Park. It is enjoyable as a family activity. I look at it as a sport thing. If we come home and do some TV watching afterwards I feel as though we have done something constructive for the day. (Father, middle-income family #9)

The concept of displaying family is appropriate for studying purposive family leisure because it conveys what some parents wish to accentuate about their family leisure practices, that they are doing worthwhile, culturally valued ‘good’ family leisure purposively. It says they are ‘doing family’ in a ‘good’ way.

The Purposive Nature of Family Leisure

As discussed earlier, Shaw and Dawson (1998, 2001, 2003) drew attention to what parents were trying to accomplish with family leisure; referring to it as ‘purposive’ to parents short and long term goals. They identified short-term goals of family bonding and laying down good memories of family life and, more long term, developing healthy lifestyles and instilling values. Parents deliberately sought to practise family leisure for the good of their children. To uncover what family leisure meant to parents, both Shaw and Dawson (1998) and this study asked parents what they thought was important about doing family leisure. In this study, it is apparent that family leisure is valued as important to the family by both middle and lower income parents, but what they find ‘purposive’ about it seems to differ. Just as Shaw and Dawson (2001) found, parents hope family leisure will lay down happy memories. A middle-income mother of three explains: *‘the kids enjoy coming on holidays ... and hopefully when they have their children they will be the same’* (Family #10). Meanwhile, the mother in lower-income family #12, who made her daughter quit gymnastics, refers to memories as well: *“Well, I think*

that's their childhood memories. They're going to be the family together, doing things together. Rather than, 'I went to gym, I don't know what the rest of the family did when I was a child'."

The first excerpt suggests that the mother hopes her children will want to follow the same pattern as they did, and the second excerpt comes back to the notion of family togetherness being paramount.

Learning values came up in answering this question about family leisure too. A mother in a middle-income family stresses learning skills, reminiscent of the 'agentic, reflexive self' Gillies (2005:840) refers to and Lareau's middle class practices of concerted cultivation (2002):

You know, kids are learning valuable skills. They learn to work together. So as well as enjoying themselves they're learning something useful to work with other people as a group and get along with each other, as individuals as well. (Mother, Family #20)

Middle-income parents seem to readily identify the values they believe their children are learning from shared family leisure, as these excerpts illustrate:

Teach them good manners and looking after your friends and how to treat other people and just being nice to people. Fellowship and getting on with your fellow man. (Mother, middle-income family #1)

Trying to instil some values to the kids. Values such as being together as a family unit and some of our values can be passed on to them. Such as sense of responsibility, sense of loyalty to the family unit, love and that sort of stuff. (Mother, middle-income family #7).

Parents named values that would arguably be useful in their children's future careers like working together, getting along, being responsible. What is interesting is the ease with which middle-income parents articulate what values are important to them.

When parents in the lower-income group talked about long-term goals of family leisure, they did not mention life-long values but rather framed family leisure as the way to build family bonds that are lasting into the future. A father of three explains:

The main reason to have family activities is to bond everyone together and develop good communication if at all possible and hopefully when they're older they will talk to us about things rather than go off to someone else. That's why I try to foster [family relationships] by trying to do things with them more than a one on one – trying to get a group together so that everyone will like one another. (Father, lower-income family #5)

As with the father in family #5 quoted above, lower-income parents were more likely to voice their awareness that someday their children will leave home so it is important to take the time now to know them and watch over them:

Very important any activities that you do with your children is always important because it won't be long before they are grown up and gone... learning more of each other especially as the children get older you know as for myself you're not home all that often cause I work long hours. The children quickly grow up and you sit down with them and talk and the next minute you realise they have grown they are a little bit older than last time you know... and also to keep tabs on things I suppose, especially with the older children. (Father, lower-income family #26)

It was difficult for me to find any mention of values beyond getting along with others and sharing in the interviews with lower-income parents as the following excerpt shows:

Umm, values and attitudes? Hmmmm. Yeah, just....just sharing and you know, thinking of other people and not just thinking of yourself and when you're...doing things together, you have to do that. Apart from doing an activity on your own, you can please yourself and how and where and why you're do it but when you're doing it together as a family you know, you can't just ignore other people as....hmm, sorts of values and things, yeah. (Father, family #21)

When the father in Family #26 said, parents need 'to keep tabs on things' he was expressing a pattern of concern that ran through the transcripts of interviews with lower-income parents. They worried about the security of their children when they are not with family members, a concern not aired by middle-income parents. Lower-income parents strove to impart values to their children through purposive leisure, but unlike middle-income parents who reinforce values compatible with future professional careers, lower-income parents spoke about the dangers of mixing with the wrong crowd, or learning values counter to those held by their parents:

I hope that I've got through to the kids that vandalism is senseless. The values that you don't touch other people's property and steal from anyone. You don't be unkind or fight and hope they will be well adjusted in terms of playing with other kids. There is never a

fight in the street and there are good kids in the street and they get on like a house on fire.
(Father, lower-income family #17)

This theme of dangerous influences emerged from other interviews with lower-income parents, like the mother with three daughters who says '*You've got to keep children busy nowadays or they'll keep themselves busy doing other things*' (Family #15).

A father puts it succinctly when talking about the reasons for doing family leisure:

I think you've just got to be involved. Because at least you know what your kids are doing and who they're hanging around with.' (Family #12).

None of the parents in the middle-income families mentioned this element of danger in allowing children leisure or play activities away from the family unit; rather as seen with the Israeli mother who actively encourages her children to make friends independently, middle-income parents in this study wanted their children to know people outside the family. As a further example, another middle-income mother says: '*I think that socialising, mixing with other people is important.. I think it's a part of how they learn about how the world works*' (Family #20).

Discussion

The findings presented in this paper have focussed on three themes emerging from the data analysis: first, classed family leisure practices; second, displaying family through family leisure; and third, how parents seem to be pursuing class specific goals in purposive family leisure. Both lower- and middle-income families watch television and while parents usually regard it as the least enjoyable family activity, sometimes it was all they felt like doing. Excerpts

from the interviews showed a range of family leisure practices that support my interpretation that some family leisure practices are classed. Lower-income families described how they sought out low cost ways to spend leisure time together, both at home and in the local area. Their aim is to have everyone in the family involved and enjoying themselves. This can be seen when the father in Family #5 described playing board games as “we’re a family together” and family bonding took precedent over activities outside the family (like the mother who objected to her daughter doing gymnastics, as it took her away from the family). This sense of being a family together, bonding with one another and communicating, and what Shaw and Dawson called “a sense of family” (2001:224) is referred to as by parents as ‘family togetherness’. In Morgan’s terms, engaging in family leisure practices they are constituting a family ‘doing family’ together (2011).

Middle-income respondents described many forms of active leisure including sports, surfing, bicycle rides and bushwalking as their usual family leisure practices, which are purposive leisure for the good of their children now and later in life. Through telling what they do for family leisure, some middle-income parents ‘display’ the kind of active, healthy family they see themselves as and as they want to be seen by others. Respondents elaborated on their family excursions to national parks, distinctive natural environments and distant cities. Some of the places named are highly regarded as destinations and by naming them gives weight to Finch’s (2007) notion of ‘displaying’ to others (in this case the interviewer) what kind of family they are.

Middle-income parents try to teach their children specific values, develop their abilities and build their self-confidence. Instilling lifelong values for individual success seems more salient for middle-income parents than for lower-income parents. This class difference resonates with theoretical arguments by Lareau (2000, 2002, 2003) and Gillies (2005) that working class and poor families need to be on guard against life’s uncertainties and middle-class parents want

to reproduce class advantages through inculcating the ‘right’ values for future success. However, it is fair to say that in both groups, family members derive pleasure from what they do together for leisure as a family. Parents tell their children nostalgic stories of their own childhood, and hope their actions will give their children happy memories of family leisure too, as Morgan (2007, 2011) felt was so important.

When parents from both income groups talked about family leisure, they all appear to pursue ‘purposive leisure’ with their children. On the one hand, middle-income parents emphasise how they promote self-development, autonomy and acquiring skills for life and optimal leisure involvement of their children into adulthood. They do active family leisure practices and give their children wide-ranging travel experiences. This is consistent with Lareau’s concept of ‘concerted cultivation’ of middle class children, Plantin’s use of the motto ‘alone is strong’ and Gillies’ ‘worthy selves’ destined for an entitled, successful adult life. On the other hand, lower-income parents preferred spending leisure time together ‘as a family’ where parents can enjoy their children’s younger years, grow lasting family bonds and fend off dangerous influences. This is in line with Lareau’s ‘natural growth,’ Plantin’s use of the motto ‘stand in line and never stick out’ and Gillies’ ‘ontological security’ that comes from “‘fitting in’ rather than ‘standing out’” (Gillies, 2005, p. 845). The examples support my interpretation of a classed dimension to purposive leisure in so much as the short term goal for family leisure among lower-income families is family bonding or family togetherness. Longer term, they hope their children will want to know them after they leave home, and hope that they will stay out of trouble.

Family leisure time is clearly an important and highly valued aspect of family life for these Australian families. Parents from both income groups talk about family leisure in ways that

show they hope the benefits will last a lifetime, so that their children will have good memories of childhood and carry the family's values and interests into their own future lives. However, as the interview data presented here shows purposive leisure reflects different classed meanings mothers and fathers give to 'doing' and sometimes 'displaying' family leisure practices.

Conclusion

Income differences may explain greater constraints and different leisure opportunities among lower- as opposed to middle-income families, but, the social worlds within which families live are to a large extent shaped by how parents earn a living. Qualitative studies by U.K. based researchers of the new sociology of class, such as Devine (2004) and Gillies (2005), Plantin's (2007) Swedish study and Lareau's (2002, 2002, 2003) research in the U.S. have influenced this study of Australian families as has the Special Issue of *Leisure Studies* on leisure and fatherhood (Kay, 2006). These works made me curious about how class and other socio-cultural processes mediate purposive leisure. It foregrounds what kinds of citizens parents are trying to shape, and the futures they imagine for their children.

The study found lower-income families engaged in family leisure practices that were inexpensive or free, mostly local and pleasurable for the whole family. They emphasized doing things together as a family in order to foster 'togetherness' and the family bond and to keep the children away from bad influences. Middle-income parents used purposive leisure to instil good habits and values in their children for success in later life. They chose family leisure practices that were active, involving activities and locations that are culturally valued and which they can display as a token of family 'goodness' (Finch, 2007). Moreover, only middle-income parents boasted about their children's sporting accomplishments.

This study substantiates Hill (2012) claim that 'social class has a powerful impact on virtually every aspect of family life...social class cuts across [gender, 'race' and ethnicity]

dimensions of inequality in its ability to explain family life' (p. xviii). Moreover, family practices and family display enable us to conceive of family leisure as sets of practices that may be classed, gendered, religious and ethnic, that have personal, cultural and social meaning, which confirm family members' connectedness to one another and display this connectedness to others. This researcher advocates the need for further study of diversity across families and differences in the way they use and value shared leisure time. It is time to shake off the long-standing and discursive legacy of 'nuclear' families and the study of family leisure as predominately linked to two parent family households (Shaw, 2010). Paying attention to family leisure practices and their classed, ethnic, religious and other possible dimensions is an opportunity for family leisure researchers to convey richer understandings of what actual families do and why they do it. Looking for instances of family 'display' through family leisure draws attention to the performative nature of family life and the extent to which actual families want to play up or down the kind of family they are. Finally, this article argues that Shaw and Dawson's (2001) concept of purposive leisure, capturing parents' intentions for particular family leisure practices, can be used in a more discerning way to account for diversity in parental intentions across class, ethnic, religious and other intersecting family identities.

References

- Åström, L. (1990). *Fäder och söner. Bland svenska män i tre generationer* [Fathers and sons. Among Swedish men in three generations]. Stockholm: Carlsson Förlag.
- Atkinson, W. (2007). Beck, individualization and the death of class: a critique. *British Journal of Sociology*, 58(3), 349-366.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005). Household Income and Income Distribution 2003-2004 Cat.6523.0
[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/011E2CDBF6EB54CCCA2574B300256EF4/\\$File/65230_2003-04.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/011E2CDBF6EB54CCCA2574B300256EF4/$File/65230_2003-04.pdf). Retrieved 1 October 2013
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society, Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Beck, U. & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Individualization*. London: Sage.
- Bialeschki, M.D. and K.D. Pearce (1997). 'I don't want a lifestyle—I want a life', The effect of role negotiations on the leisure of lesbian mothers. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29(1), 113-131.

- Bottero, N. (2004). Class Identities and the Identity of Class. *Sociology*, 38, 985-1003.
- Chamber, D. (2012). *A Sociology of Family Life; Change and Diversity in Intimate Relations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Devine, F. (2004). *Class Practices; How Parents Help Their Children Get Good Jobs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finch, J. (2007). Displaying Families, *Sociology*, 41(1), 65-81.
- Gillies, V. (2005). Raising the 'meritocracy', Parenting and the individualization of social class, *Sociology* 39(5), 835-853.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity; Self and society in the late modern age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. (1998). *The Third Way,. The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Godbey, G. (1994). *Leisure in Your Life; An Exploration*. 4th ed. State College, PA.: Venture Publishing.
- Harrington, M. (2001) "Gendered Time: Leisure in Family Life," pp. 343-382 in Daly, K. J. (Ed.) *Minding the Time in Family Experience: Emerging Perspectives and Issues*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science
- Harrington, M. (2006b). Sport and leisure as contexts for fathering in Australian families. *Leisure Studies*, 25(2), 165-189.
- Hill, M.S. (1988). Marital stability and spouses shared time. *Journal of Family Issues*, 9, 427-451.
- Hill, S.A. (2012). *Families A Social Class Perspective*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Holman, T.B. & Epperson, A. (1984). Family and leisure , A review of the literature with research recommendations. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 16, 277-294.
- Kay, T. (2006). Special Issue: Fathering Through Leisure, *Leisure Studies*, 25:2, 126-256.
- Lareau, A. (2000) 'My wife can tell me who I know: Methodological and conceptual problems in studying fathers,' *Qualitative Sociology*, 23(4), 407-433.
- Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families, *American Sociological Review*, 67 (5), 747-776.
- Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods; class, race and family life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Miles, M.B. and A.M. Huberman. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*, 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage.
- Morgan, D.H.J. (1996). *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Morgan, D. H.J. (2011). *Rethinking Family Practices*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Neuman, W.L. (2000). *Social Research Methods Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 4th Ed. Sydney: Allyn and Bacon.
- Orthner, D.K. (1975). Leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction over the marital career. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 37, 91-103.
- Orthner, D.K. (1985) Conflict and leisure interaction in families. In B.G. Gunter, J. Stanley and R. St. Clair (Eds.) *Transitions to Leisure; Conceptual and Human Issues* (pp. 133-139). New York: New York University Press.

- Orthner, D.K. and J.A. Mancini (1980). Leisure behavior and group dynamics: The case of the family. In S.E. Iso-Ahola, (Ed.), *Social Psychological perspectives on leisure and recreation* (pp. 307-328). Springfield, Ill.: Thomas.
- Orthner, D.K. and J.A. Mancini (1991). Benefits of leisure for family bonding. In B.L. Driver, P.J. Brown and G.L. Peterson (Eds.), *Benefits of Leisure* (pp. 289-301). State College: Venture.
- Plantin, L. (2007). Different classes, different fathers? On fatherhood, economic conditions and class in Sweden, *Community, Work and Family* 10(1), 93-110.
- Rapoport, R. & Rapoport, R.N. (1975). *Leisure and the family life cycle*. London, U.K.: Routledge.
- Rehman, L.A. (2001). Using Eichler to inform family leisure research. In S. Clough and J. White (Eds) *Women's Leisure Experiences: Ages, Stages and Roles* (pp. 87-97). Eastbourne, U.K.: Leisure Studies Association.
- Shaw, S.M. (2010). Diversity and Ideology: Changes in Canadian Family Life and Implications for Leisure. *World Leisure Journal* 52 (1), 4-13.
- Shaw, S.M. and Dawson, D.J. (1998). *Active family lifestyles: Motivations, benefits, constraints and participation*, Ottawa, ON: Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.
- Shaw, S.M. and Dawson, D.J. (2001). Purposive leisure: Examining parental discourses on family activities. *Leisure Sciences* 23(4), 217-231.
- Shaw, S.M. and Dawson, D.J. (2003). Contradictory aspects of family leisure: Idealization versus experience. *Leisure/Loisir* 28 (3-4), 179-201.
- Smith, D.E. (1993). The standard North American family: SNAF as an ideological code. *Journal of Family Issues*, 14(1), 50-65.
- Strauss, A.L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Such, E. (2006). Leisure and fatherhood in dual-earner families. *Leisure Studies*, 25(2), 185-199.
- Watson, R. & Scraton, S. J. (2013). Leisure studies and intersectionality. *Leisure Studies*, 32:1. 35-47.
- Willming, C. & Gibson, H. (2000) A view of leisure patterns of family life in the late 1990s. . *Leisure and Society*, 23(1), 121-144.
- Young, M. & Wilmott, P. (1973). *The Symmetrical Family*. Penguin: Middlesex
- Zimmerman, D.H. & Weider, D.L. (1977). The diary:diary interview method. *Urban Life*, 5(4), 479-499.

¹ A notable exception to the paucity of work on diverse families is the plethora of quantitative work on 'family leisure functioning' emanating from faith-based educational institutions in the U.S.

² I was a member of the original research team but when the grant came through from the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Institute I had already accepted an academic appointment in Brisbane, Australia.

³ These income groups span the middle deciles of income levels in the 2003-2004 Household Income and Income Distribution report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Cat. 6523.0) . That is, the 5th decile had a mean income of \$439/wk (\$19,292 pa) in 1999 and \$425/wk (\$22,100)pa in 2004 and the 7th decile had a mean income of \$584/wk (\$30,368pa) in 1999 and \$635/wk (\$33,020pa) in 2004. As the data was collected in the years 1999 to 2004, it is reasonable to assume that below \$25,000 and above \$30,000 broadly reflect the difference between low and middle income among Australian families at the time of data collection.

[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/011E2CDBF6EB54CCCA2574B300256EF4/\\$File/65230_2003-04.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/011E2CDBF6EB54CCCA2574B300256EF4/$File/65230_2003-04.pdf)