

Copyright © 2007 Michelle Van Groningen Anthony

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARITAL SATISFACTION  
AND FAMILY COHESION AMONG EVANGELICALS

---

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

---

by  
Michelle Van Groningen Anthony

May 2007

UMI Number: 3314597

Copyright 2007 by  
Anthony, Michelle Van Groningen

All rights reserved.

## INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

**UMI**<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform 3314597

Copyright 2008 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

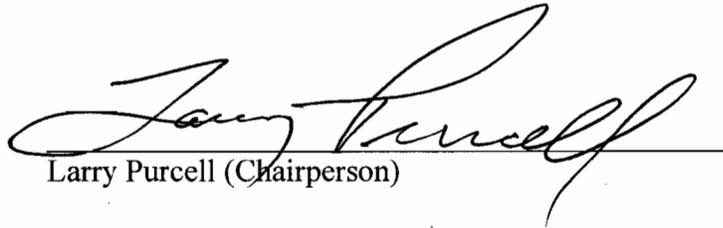
ProQuest LLC  
789 E. Eisenhower Parkway  
PO Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

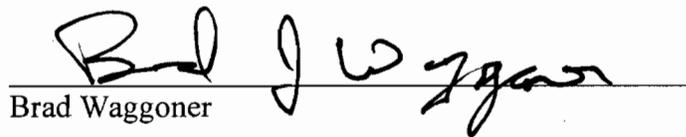
**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARITAL SATISFACTION AND  
FAMILY COHESION AMONG EVANGELICALS

Michelle Van Groningen Anthony

Read and Approved by:

  
Larry Purcell (Chairperson)

  
Brad Waggoner

Date 5/20/07

To Ron and Verna Van Groningen,  
my beloved parents and the heralds of spiritual life to me.

I am eternally grateful.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
PREFACE .....	xi
Chapter	
1. RESEARCH CONCERN .....	1
Introduction to the Research Problem .....	2
Theological Paradigm for Marriage and Family .....	3
Marriage and Family Cohesion .....	6
Research Purpose .....	9
Delimitations of the Study .....	10
Research Questions .....	11
Terminology .....	12
Procedural Overview .....	13
Research Assumptions .....	14
2. PRECEDENT LITERATURE .....	15
The Divine Design .....	15
From Generation to Generation .....	17

Chapter	Page
Marriage as a Metaphor .....	18
The Effect of Sin on Marriage .....	19
Marital Satisfaction as a By-product not a Goal .....	21
Defining Marital Satisfaction .....	22
Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale .....	23
Dyadic Adjustment Scale .....	24
Happiness as Satisfaction .....	26
Marriage and Divorce Trends .....	27
Period Effects .....	28
Child-Rearing .....	29
Historical Review of Research on Marital Satisfaction .....	31
Long Term Marriage Studies .....	39
Theory Development for Marital Satisfaction Research .....	40
Interrelated Sub-systems in Marital Satisfaction .....	43
Family Cohesion Theory Development .....	44
Family Adaptability .....	52
Research on Cohesion and Adaptability .....	55
The Circumplex Model .....	56
Family Life Cycle Theory Development .....	60
The Effects of Mortality and Fertility .....	61
Defining Life Cycle Stages .....	62

Chapter	Page
Life Cycle Theory and Its Effect on Marital Satisfaction .....	62
The curvilinear pattern .....	67
Summary .....	69
3. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN .....	74
Research Questions Synopsis .....	75
Research Design Overview .....	76
Population .....	77
Sample .....	77
Delimitations .....	77
Research Method .....	78
Instrumentation .....	78
Research Procedures .....	85
Conclusion .....	87
4. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS .....	88
Compilation Protocol .....	88
Findings and Displays .....	89
Evaluation of Research Design .....	110
5. CONCLUSIONS .....	112
Purpose and Research Questions .....	113
Research Implications .....	115
Research Application .....	131

	Page
Further Research.....	133
Appendix	
1. ROCKHARBOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY SURVEY.....	134
REFERENCE LIST .....	138

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographic characteristics of respondents. ....	90
2. ANOVA summary for mean group Dyadic Adjustment Scale and family system type .....	94
3. Tukey post hoc of mean difference and significance between family system types .....	95
4. Descriptive analysis of marital satisfaction and family income level .....	95
5. Descriptive analysis of marital satisfaction and education .....	96
6. Rules of thumb of interpreting correlation coefficients .....	97
7. Marital satisfaction between genders .....	98
8. Marital satisfaction and years married to current spouse .....	98
9. ANOVA means and standard deviations for marital satisfaction and years married .....	99
10. Tukey post hoc between marital satisfaction and years married .....	99
11. Marital Satisfaction and Number of Children Present in the Home .....	100

## Table

12. Analysis of Family System Type and Years Married to Current Spouse.....	102
13. Cross Tabulation of FST and Years Married to Current Spouse .....	103
14. Analysis of FST and Number of Children Living at Home .....	104
15. Descriptive Stats Between Marital Satisfaction and Family Cohesion .....	105
16. Correlations Between Marital Satisfaction and Family Cohesion.....	105
17. ANOVA on Family Life Cycle and Marital Satisfaction.....	107
18. Descriptive Analysis of FLC and Marital Satisfaction .....	107
19. Tukey Post Hoc on FLC and Marital Satisfaction .....	108
20. Chi Square Analysis on FLC and Family Adaptability.....	109
21. ANOVA of FLC and Adaptability .....	109
22. Means and Standard Deviations for FLC and Adaptability.....	110
23. FACES III: Linear Scoring and Interpretation .....	115

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Circumplex model .....	59
2. Scattergram of positive relationship between marital satisfaction and family cohesion . . . . .	106

## PREFACE

Although this work bears my name, I could not have completed it without the guidance, support, and love of many individuals. This document of research has been accomplished through the assistance of many who have served to challenge my thinking as a student and have helped me put into practice what I have learned as a researcher. The faculty who served as my professors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary provided a rich and valuable doctoral experience for me. Dr. Larry Purcell, who acted as chairman for my dissertation work, was insightful and clear in his guidance of me through this process. My gratitude also extends to Dr. Brad Waggoner, who served both as Dean during my doctoral studies and co-chairman of my dissertation committee.

Many others have also provided support along the way. My parents, Ron and Verna Van Groningen have always believed in me, offered unwavering confidence in my potential, and have been used by God in my life as a source of strength. I also wish to thank them for modeling a marriage that is authentic and honoring to God for over forty-five years! I wish to thank my sister, Kimberly, who has faithfully prayed for me and offered encouragement on countless occasions. She is dearly loved!

My colleagues at Rock Harbor Church have been a tremendous support during the entire process of accomplishing this goal. I thank them for their prayers, flexibility in my ministry schedule, and for believing in this research enough to let me survey our church body. I especially want to thank my supervisor, Stacy Scott, for her outstanding

support of me and this project. My colleagues at Biola University's Talbot School of Theology have been cheering me along from the very first day. I am especially grateful to Dr. Mark Henze, whose expertise in statistics made that part of this process *almost* fun!

To my dear friends, Cheryl Howard, Kathy Natalizia, and Cristi Thomas, I thank them for their undying love and friendship to me during the many years of study to accomplish this goal. Each of them is more like family to me than she realizes and their prayers and help with my family needs when I was away allowed me to take just one more step in this process when I thought I could not.

No words of thanksgiving could adequately express my gratitude to my husband and best friend, Michael, for his support during this work. For the countless times he guided and directed me through the rough spots of this dissertation, for the sacrifices of time and finances to make this dream a reality, and for his belief in my ability to complete this process, I am eternally indebted to his love and devotion to me. To my dear children, Chantel and Brendon, I am honored to be their mother. They inspire me and have genuinely supported me in every imaginable way through love and sacrifice over the past three years of study. For this I am so thankful.

And finally, I thank Jesus, my Lord and Savior for His strength and compelling love. To God be the glory!

Michelle Van Groningen Anthony

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2007

## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH CONCERN

More than 90 percent of Americans will marry at some point in their lifetime (U.S Census Bureau 2006), and certainly most of these individuals enter marriage with the hope of a happy and long-term relationship. Unfortunately, approximately 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce and even some enduring marriages are not considered satisfying to one or both partners (McGrath 2000; Berscheid and Peplau 1983; Spanier 1981). Marital satisfaction has been studied using a variety of terms and concepts such as marital stability, marital cohesiveness, marital happiness, and dyadic adjustment.

The breakdown of marriages, as well as the family unit, is a cause for great concern among Christian leaders today (Barna 2003, 5; Swindoll 1991, 14-15; Land and Perry 2002, 1-3; Dobson 2004, 9). The United States has the highest divorce rate in the western world (Burns and Scott 1994). One contributing factor to divorce is marital dissatisfaction (Sande and Raabe 2002, 179). Marital satisfaction has been and continues to be studied significantly within literature, yet with the continued high divorce rate, it appears that the correlates of marital satisfaction need to be investigated further (Arcus 1992; Robinson and Blanton 1993).

Certain factors, which have been shown in the literature to significantly correlate to marital satisfaction, include the parent-child relationship, intergenerational transmission, internal social support, external social support, and conflict management

styles. Family cohesion has been studied using a plethora of descriptors as well. Families display a high degree of cohesion through strong kinships, identification of family roles, high achievement, work, and religious orientation. This multidimensional approach seeks to operationalize these factors and determine their level of presence in the marriage/family dynamic (Olson et al. 1983, 48).

Certainly, there are multiple issues that contribute to marital satisfaction and family cohesion, and while some of these will be discussed, this research project sought to determine if there is a relationship between the two of them. Furthermore, it sought to determine if the Family life cycle (the age of children in the home) contributes to either marital satisfaction/dissatisfaction or family cohesion or both (Cron 1994, 9; Burr 1970, 30). These two factors, marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability, was explored in this study against the backdrop of family life cycles among evangelical Christian parents.

### **Introduction to the Research Problem**

There are both theological and educational concerns that have generated this research study. Theologically speaking, the Bible has clear teachings on the value of the marriage and family relationships in both the Old and New Testaments. It is evident that God places great importance on the lifetime marriage vow (Matthew 19:5-6). In addition, the educational field has been a pioneer in understanding the peculiar dynamics between husband and wife and that relationship in its correspondence to their children as a family unit (Hendrick 1988, 93). Research educators in the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology have added to the abundance of statistical information on a host of intricacies within the marriage/family unit. However, much of the future research

will need to focus the current information and theological considerations while building upon prior studies using consistent definitions and variables for optimal implementation of the findings (Anthony 1993, 97).

### **Theological Paradigm for Marriage and Family**

God's designed plan for marriage was for male and female to become "one flesh" for the duration of their earthly lives (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6), to procreate, as He blesses (Genesis 1:28), and to pass on the legacy of blessing and faith to the next generation (Psalms 78) through love and grace (McGrath 2000, 15). It was the intent of the Godhead to manifest the union of the triune God within the unity of His highest creation—mankind. In this final work of creation, the *piece de resistance*, we find that in man's strength, and woman's beauty, the human race would manifest the incorruptible *imago dei* (Eldredge and Eldredge 2005, 24-25). Unlike any other part or work of creation, the marriage relationship, and ultimately, the family, would be the place where God would manifest the harmony and unity that the Trinity enjoys. Certainly, this plan was thwarted by sin, and the sin nature led to separateness, and separateness has led to divorce (Swindoll, 1991 178-79).

**Perfect union.** "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, *and called their name Adam*, in the day when they were created" (Genesis 5:2, italics mine). It is interesting to note that although the woman is soon named "Eve," He also referred to both male and female as "Adam" in the day they were created (Adam means "man"). Adam and Eve were created with God-ordained

differences from each other, but together it has been suggested that they made a full "man," or perhaps, a complete picture of God Himself. There was perfection in their union. Their differences were not a source of discord or inequality, but rather a beautiful compliment to one another (Miller 1998, 76; Eldredge and Eldredge 2005, 20).

Together, God gave them the task of overseeing and ruling His creation: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). It is interesting to note that God gave the above commission to *both* of them. There is no hint that there was anything but equal authority between man and woman, as they existed in a sinless state. However, in the next few chapters of Genesis, God reveals that sin entered the heart of Adam and Eve. The result was a curse placed upon both man and woman, which would affect the whole earth (Eldredge and Eldredge 2005, 24).

**The Fall and the curse.** This curse has affected all aspects of creation, from the ground itself (infested with weeds and thorns) to human relationships. It appears from Scripture that when Eve ate the forbidden fruit and enticed Adam to sin with her, one of the consequences for women was the loss of a sort of equality with men, as husbands were to now rule over their wives. Instead of men and women ruling together, the wife would now be "ruled by her husband" (Genesis 3:16). However, even in the midst of this curse upon mankind, a promise of restoration was given that would be fulfilled in the Messiah (Genesis 3:15).

When Jesus came as sinless Man and died as the prophesied Messiah as the payment for sin, all things were restored *positionally*. In actuality, the restoration of mankind (men and women) began to take place at that very moment. Though the complete cleansing of the curse has not yet been manifested on the earth, the day is coming when it will be perfected. In Christ, the curse upon women has been lifted in a spiritual sense. Although not all things are restored at this time in the physical sense, in the spiritual realm, they already have been dealt with *legally* (Miller 1998, 43).

Perhaps issues of the fall have entered into the marriage union in ways that we are even unaware of, as well as those aforementioned here. Yet, an overwhelming amount of marriages end in divorce citing the cause as “irreconcilable differences.” The inability to reconcile with another, with whom one has made a God-ordained vow, should be a serious concern for Christian educators today. Divorce is readily becoming an easy option for Christian and non-Christian couples alike (Dobson 2004, 7).

**Divorce and society.** While divorce was never a part of God’s perfect plan, He did give Moses the authority to issue divorce papers based upon the “hardness of one’s heart” (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Later, Jesus and the apostle Paul address specific issues surrounding divorce and even remarriage while always upholding the value and sacredness of this holy vow (Matthew 19:5-9; 1 Corinthians 7). “To put it succinctly, the institution of marriage represents the very foundation of human social order. Everything of value sits on that base” (Dobson 2004, 9).

The family is one of only three divinely ordained institutions (the other two are the church and civil authority), and the one institution that everybody has in common; we

are all born and part of a family at some point in our lives (Land and Perry 2002, 8-9). Essential to the center of culture and society, the family is the place where God desired for true security and genuine morality to be passed down through each generation, yet marriage and the family are under fire in American history. “The key ingredients to a godly home are a godly mom and dad who are loving and praying for their children and who acknowledge that God is the head of their home. The core of a solid family is a marriage founded in the rock, that is Jesus Christ” (Land and Perry 2002, 9).

### **Marriage/Family Cohesion**

One variable in the understanding of marital satisfaction is the issue of marital cohesiveness. Cohesion is defined as “the emotional bonding members have with one another” (Olson et al. 1983, 80). While specific operational definitions may differ, the overarching concept of cohesion is used across the social science disciplines, citing its relevancy as a unifying dimension in marital relationships (Olson and Sprenkle 1979, 5). Growing out of the abundance of work in this area of marriage and family cohesion, researchers have perceived that a *balance* is needed for the family system to operate effectively (Olson et al. 1983, 81).

Adaptability has been closely related to cohesiveness in the past several decades as researchers contrasted the components of cohesion and adaptability combined in a matrix, referred to as the *Circumplex Model* (see Figure 1). Adaptability denotes the extent to which a marital or family system can balance stability and change and is defined as “the ability of a marital/family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress” (Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle 1980, 131).

**Multidimensional approach.** Rather than describing couples merely from a single variable construct, there is conceptual and empirical value in developing “typologies” (Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle 1979, 6). This structural perspective has proved to be a valuable theoretical approach for understanding the family, highlighting systematic arrangements and dynamic social interactions. Its theoretical construct is based upon a multidimensional approach whereby multiple factors are seen as influencing cohesion among family members. Theoretical constructs which have been proposed as facilitative of adaptive coping include the concepts of family modeling, family support systems, and balance within the family environment. Thus, family characteristics such as adaptability, communication style, family harmony, and satisfaction with family life may directly affect the coping strategies of family members, and in so doing, mediate the level of individual and family stress (Olson et al. 1983, 56-60).

The Circumplex Model serves to condense much of the theoretical material along two dimensions of marital and family functioning: (1) Cohesion—a measure of emotional bonding vs. individual autonomy; and (2) Adaptability—a measure of flexibility in adjusting power relationships during stressful situations (Olson et al. 1979, 20-27). The Circumplex Model delineates four levels of cohesion, ranging from disengaged (very low), through separated (low to moderate) and connected (moderate to high), to enmeshed (very high). The central levels, separated and connected, are hypothesized to be the most favorable for family functioning, while the extremes of disengagement or enmeshment are generally seen as being problematic. This model

permits 16 family types identified by utilizing the FACES III instrument, a 20-item scale containing 10 cohesion items and 10 adaptability items.

Components measured within cohesion consist of issues such as emotional bonding, decision-making, family boundaries, time, and friends. The adaptability construct measures components such as leadership, control, discipline, roles, and rules (Olson 1991, 75-6). The 3-D Circumplex Model defines and displays the 16 various family types (see Figure 1). Specific procedures for identifying these types and their analyses are included in chapters three (Methodological Design) and four (Analysis of Findings) of this research study.

**Social exchange theory.** George Levinger applied the constructs of cohesiveness to marital relationships to develop the social exchange theory of marital satisfaction. He described marital strength in regards to the social and psychological attractions within marriage in contrast to the outward pull of alternative relationships outside of marriage. He categorized marital relationships in three categories: (1) “full shell”—which is characterized by strong attractions within and strong boundaries from without; (2) “no shell”—which describes a marriage in dissolution due to disconnection and partners living separate lives; and, (3) “empty shell”—which is the condition where togetherness in marriage is maintained primarily due to the strong barriers opposing dissolution of the marriage (Levinger 1965, 19-28).

Certain factors, which have been shown in the literature to significantly correlate to marital satisfaction, include the parent-child relationship, intergenerational transmission, internal social support, external social support, and conflict management styles. Family cohesion has been studied using a plethora of descriptors as well. Families

display a high degree of cohesion through strong kinships, identification of family roles, high achievement, work, and religious orientation. This multidimensional approach seeks to operationalize these factors and determine their level of presence in the marriage/family dynamic (Olson et al. 1983, 48).

The strength of marriage is constantly in tension between attraction and opposition. Perhaps, God in His omniscient foreknowledge, understanding the hardness of human hearts and the stress factors accompanying child-rearing, designed the home to be a place of worship and spiritual education resulting in a bond which is ideal for family cohesiveness, thus allowing for married couples to experience greater marital satisfaction during an otherwise turbulent time of testing (Holden 2001, 657). These issues were explored, researched, and discussed in this bi-variant study in order to discover if there are any correlations between the two aforementioned variables.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship, if any, between factors that effect the development of marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability among evangelical Christian married parents across three family life cycles in a select Southern Californian sample, Rock Harbor Church of Costa Mesa, California. In addition, the purpose of this study is to further the understanding of Christian marriage and family dynamics while raising children in ways that will allow for Christian educators and ministers to more effectively meet the changing needs in the diverse family structures present in Southern Californian culture.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Considering that this study was conducted in order to determine the relationship, if any, between marital satisfaction and family cohesion among evangelical Christian parents across stages of family life cycle, one professing evangelical church was selected. At this church, one pastor, one member of the elder board, and the children and youth pastors were consulted in regard to the evangelical teachings of the church.

This research was delimited to take into account other possible contributing factors to marital satisfaction such as family of origin issues, commitment to monogamy, job stability, pre-marital cohabitation, or issues regarding mental or physical health. The findings of this research were focused within the framework of marital satisfaction as it pertains to family cohesion and adaptability across stages of the family life cycle.

This was a correlational study using a descriptive design research methodology. As such, correlational studies do not account for causation. Therefore this study does not determine if cohesion or adaptability habits in families cause marital satisfaction. This study relates only to the variables under consideration. It is reasonable to believe that other variables which were not studied may also affect the results of the current study. Significant emotional or economic changes within the sample marriages prior to or during participation in this investigation may also limit the generalizability of the findings of this study.

The population used for the purposes of this research sample was drawn from one evangelical Christian church, Rock Harbor church in Costa Mesa, California, and therefore cannot become a generalization for all evangelical Christian churches.

Furthermore, this study was delimited to married adult parents with at least one child in one geographical region and thus cannot be assumed to be true of all married adult parents in other geographical regions of the United States or the world. The child or children were required to be currently living under the same roof with their parents at the time of the survey. Married couples did not need to take the survey together; one person in the marriage could be surveyed. Excluded from this study were unmarried and single divorced parents. Further, married couples without children were excluded. Lastly, it was beyond the scope of this study to predict marital success or satisfaction vis-à-vis family cohesion/adaptability success.

### **Research Questions**

Through analyzing the marital satisfaction and level of family cohesion/adaptability among evangelical Christian couples in various stages of parenting, four research questions were explored:

1. What contributing factors characterize the greatest levels of perceived marital satisfaction among evangelical Christian parents?
2. What family types are identified utilizing the *Circumplex Model* for assessing family cohesion/adaptability within the sample of evangelical Christian parents?
3. What relationship, if any, is there between marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between the family life cycle and marital satisfaction, family cohesion/family adaptability, or both?

## Terminology

The following are terms used within this body of research:

*Marital satisfaction.* Marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation and a process of achieving congruence, harmony, intimacy, and happiness (Merves-Okin 1982, 33). It is a multi-dimensional concept comprised of “a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of (1) troublesome marital differences; (2) inter-spousal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) marital satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of marital functioning” (Spanier and Cole 1976, 127-28).

*Marriage or family cohesion.* Marriage or family cohesion is “the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group. Inducements to remain in any group include the attractiveness of the group itself and the strength of the restraints against leaving it; . . . Thus the strength of the marital relationship would be a direct function of the attractions within and barriers around the marriage, and an inverse function of such attractions and barriers from other relationships” (Levinger 1965, 19).

*Adaptability.* Adaptability is “the ability of the marital family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress” (Olson et al. 1979, 12).

*Early family life cycle.* Early family life cycle is defined as one who is “married, living with spouse, has one or more children in infancy through age six (normally in the first grade). The average early family life cycle spans six years” (Cron 1994, 9).

*Middle family life cycle.* Middle family life cycle is defined as one who is “married living with spouse, has one or more children, oldest child between age seven

(second grade) and age fourteen (ninth grade). The average middle family life cycle spans eight years” (Cron 1994, 9).

*Late family life cycle.* Late family life cycle is defined as one who is “married living with spouse, has one or more children, oldest child between age 15 (tenth grade) and 21-25 (senior year in college). The average late family life cycle spans six/seven years (Cron 1994, 10).

*Evangelical.* Evangelical is the term that refers to those who are from a Protestant movement, who have embraced such fundamentals of their faith as the authority of the Bible and eternal personal salvation through regeneration based on faith in the atoning work of Christ. The hallmark of evangelicalism is a spiritual transformation that is evidenced by moral conduct, devotion to Bible reading, prayer, and evangelism (Marsden 1987, 190).

### **Procedural Overview**

This study used a descriptive correlational design. That is, the interrelationships were examined between the variables without manipulation by the researcher. The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which variables such as marital satisfaction and family cohesion impact each other across the three identified family life cycles; no causality can be inferred from the data obtained.

The population of this study was the congregation of Rock Harbor Church located in Costa Mesa, California. The church membership as of May 2006 was approximately 6500 individuals, with approximately 700 married family units. The sample was randomly drawn by inviting all interested married adult parents to participate by completing the survey instruments (Dyadic Adjustment Scale, FACES III, and seven

other demographic questions). Any married individuals with children who attended worship services on the weekends of December 16, 2006 through January 31, 2007 had the opportunity to participate. In addition, any married individuals with children were able to participate in this study online on the Rock Harbor website at [www.rockharbor.org/family](http://www.rockharbor.org/family), following the December 16, 2006 weekend services. All surveys were completed by February 1, 2007. It was expected that the sample would consist of 400 returned surveys.

### **Research Assumptions**

The assumptions of this study centered on the following:

1. It is assumed that persons experience marital satisfaction differently. Some may consider their current marital state as satisfactory, when that exact situation may or may not be considered satisfactory to others.
2. It is assumed that the various scales that are used in this study accurately measured such factors as marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability.
3. It is assumed that variations in the administration of the survey were sufficiently uniform and that the instructions were understandable so as to produce valid results.
4. It is assumed that adult respondents responded honestly to the items on the survey and that the administration procedures did not bias the response of the subjects.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRECEDENT LITERATURE

Marital Satisfaction has been an area of increasing interest for research in the past several decades, beginning its momentum in the 1970s and 1980s and culminating in the close of the century with a vast number of papers published on a wide array of topics pertaining to marital satisfaction. The magnitude of writings on this topic suggests that researchers understand the importance and significance the quality of marriage has on the enhancement of understanding in the fields of psychology, sociology, parenting, economics, physical health, the work industry, and religious orientation (Bradbury et al. 2000, 964-65).

#### **The Divine Design**

One such area, which is uniquely interested in this subject, is the evangelical church. Perhaps there is no greater area in human relationships that reflects the intimacy that Christian believers experience with their God and creator (Dobson 2004, 1). God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden and designed Eve specifically for Adam. Noting that it was not good for man to be alone, God therefore determined to make him a suitable helpmate (Genesis 1:18). The Bible also declares in Proverbs 18:22 (AV), "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, obtaineth favor of the Lord." Swindoll says, "We need to blow the dust off God's original blueprint for marriage and the home. Our

great need is to hear what He has to say to His people about His design. After all, marriage is His invention” (Swindoll 1980, 16).

Marriage is God’s plan for one man and one woman freely committed to one another in a distinctive relationship. When Jesus was asked about divorce He strengthened the principle of sacred union by quoting from Genesis 2:18-25 (AV):

Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. . . . For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. . . .what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matthew 19:6)

This relationship between man and woman was referred to as the divine union that once God joins, no man shall separate.

For a man to “cleave to his wife” demands considerable attention as Pinson expounds that the word “cleave” in the original language means *glued together*. “The union is not like two liquids poured together so that each loses its identity in the new mixture, instead, it is like two pieces of wood glued together so that each maintains its distinct identity although the two become a new unit” (Pinson 1981, 39-40).

The Bible also declares that marriage is to be an exclusive relationship. Genesis 2:24 says that the couple is to become “one flesh.” Pinson explains that this exclusive quality means that one must forsake parents and refuse to commit adultery. The marriage union is to be an intimate relationship and is to be set apart by sexual intercourse (Pinson 1981, 40). Even the words “unite” and “one flesh” are seen as sensual words, yet the words also suggest companionship beyond the mere sexual union (Sell 1981, 54).

## From Generation to Generation

Out of this design of human intimacy through marriage, God purposed for the married couple to procreate and raise the next generation together. Children were to be taught about who God is through the loving interactions between their mothers and fathers. As outlined in Deuteronomy 6:4-25, the best of life's lessons were to be learned through the daily relationships with family members—especially parents (Stonehouse 1998 21-28).

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. When your son asks you in time to come, saying, “What *is the meaning of* the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?”, then you shall say to your son: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* this day.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25 NKJV).

Likewise, Psalm 78:1-8 paints a glorious picture of the master plan for passing faith from one generation to the next. Consider the words of the psalmist Asaph:

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generations to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done (Psalms 78:1-4 NAS).

For God's perfect plan, of faith instillation from one generation to the next, to be implemented, marital and family cohesion must be present and active in the home.

## Marriage as a Metaphor

The Apostle Paul refers to marriage as a reflection of the church, citing the believing church as the bride, and Christ as her bridegroom. He further states that the husband shall be the head over his wife, just as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23-25). These words have weighted importance in this area of marital satisfaction and cohesiveness. Certainly husbands loved their wives, but the word used here in Ephesians 5: 25 is the Greek word *agapao*, which means “to esteem and value the object of love to such a degree that one gives his/her best for that object” (Self and Self 1981, 33).

It is impossible for a husband to be capable of this kind of love without voluntarily surrendering an autocratic domination over his wife, which some have misinterpreted as the “headship of the marriage.” Genuine headship is much different, and has a great impact in the Christian marriage. The wife is to be satisfied by this surrendered and self-giving love, and the husband is to be honored by a wife who understands that her husband has selflessly given himself to serve her, when he himself could have demanded service (Self and Self 1981, 34-35).

Certainly, no marriage has ever had the privilege of living in Eden as Adam and Eve did, living in perfect harmony with each other and their God. Instead all marriages since the fall have brought with them aspects of the fall and an inherited sin nature imputed to us through Adam (Romans 5:12). With this issue of sin and cursing, marriages struggle to find a paradise lost and long for the intimacy that God has originally ordained for man and woman to enjoy (Eldredge and Eldredge 2005, 48-52). While not designed by God to be an eternal union as discussed by Jesus in a conversation

regarding marriage in the eternal dwelling of men and women in heaven (Matthew 22:28-30), it was God's design that individuals would remain together as one, and even monogamous (especially in the New Testament teachings, at least) for the duration of their earthly lives (1 Corinthians 7:39).

### **The Effect of Sin on Marriage**

In Genesis 5:2, the Bible states that God created both male and female and called *their* name Adam (italics mine), which translated means "man." It is only later that Adam himself names his wife, Eve. Perhaps, God designed both male and female in their oneness to represent the fullness of God, in equal yet complementary ways. Together, God gave them the task of overseeing and ruling His creation: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). It is interesting to note that God gave the above commission to *both* of them.

However, after the fall recorded in chapter three of Genesis, the curses, from which the earth, the serpent, and both man and woman would all suffer, changed the God-ordained order of His creation (Eldredge and Eldredge 2005, 24). As sin entered the human race, no longer would man and woman join in their rule over the earth and its creation, but the man would have dominion over the woman; to rule her (Genesis 3:16). Perhaps this functional inequality is what the apostle Paul is referring to in 1 Timothy 2:13 when he states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, but she shall learn in silence. For it was Eve who sinned first and then her husband, Adam."

The apparent loss of positional and functional equality has led to enmity between the genders from the very beginning of time (Miller 1998, 43).

**Social issues: Divorce and adultery.** Issues within the sin nature of men and women, led to adultery, hardness of heart, divorce, and even murder. In the Old Testament we find that Moses allows for a man to divorce his wife based on issues of “uncleanliness,” in which one issue would be adultery or infidelity (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). However, Dallas Willard points out that perhaps the issue of *hardness of heart* and *uncleanliness*, may extend further into societal issues facing the twenty-first century Christian church. He describes these issues as perhaps including pornography, lust, physical or emotional abuse, and abandonment. He conversely argues that while even the accepted biblical cause for divorce seems to imply that the act of adultery naturally and positively leads to divorce, that many marriages have survived this trial and are living testimonies to God’s power and grace (Willard 1997, 168-71).

Among many evangelical churches today, adultery is seen as the “unforgivable” sin. It is discussed, gossiped about, written about, surveyed, counseled, and even “exposed,” but often little is done to discern why the infidelity occurred in the first place. Too often, the signs of dissatisfaction among married couples go without notice or conversation until something drastic, or unfaithful, takes place. In a study where married individuals who participated in extra marital sex, researchers seek to identify how and why such impulses occur. Much of the research focused on (1) seeking intimacy or romance, and (2) seeking validation and affirmation outside of a marriage that had lost these qualities (Glass and Wright 1977, 691-93). It appears that many individuals are seeking satisfaction in their marriages, and the question for the Christian

marriage partner becomes whether that is something God intended for us to “seek after” or not.

### **Marital Satisfaction as a By-Product not a Goal**

While Scripture does give specific instructions on how we are to care for one another with humility and unity (Philippians 2:1-7), preference (Romans 12:10), forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32), love (1 Corinthians 13), a heart of service and submission (Ephesians 5:21-25); it says almost nothing about issues of marital satisfaction or happiness. This omission seems to indicate that happiness and satisfaction may have been designed as by-products of living selfless, obedient, eternally-focused lives rather than the goal itself. God’s mandates offer the Christian marriage a blessing as a couple walks in obedience to them, but just as the foolish man who heard the words of Christ, but did not act upon them, many marriages “crumble to the ground” without adherence to the most basic of God’s standards for us to live in harmony with one another (Matthew 7:24-27).

If such a travesty occurs in the heart of a married individual, and divorce becomes the remedy, the church will also continue to reap the bitter harvest of brokenness. The family unit is in crisis with over half of the children in the United States being raised in single-parent homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The church is positioned for multiple ministries to the victims of abuse, divorce, abandonment, fatherless/motherless homes, etc., but even greater, the church is positioned to model to the unbelieving world the satisfaction in marriage that God intended and prevent much of the need for such ministries altogether (Land and Perry 2002, 10).

Ephesians 5:15-16 states that as disciples of Christ, we are to be “. . .redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (NKJV). The Greek word for “redeem”, is *exagorazo*, a strengthened form of the word *agorazo*, “to buy.” In *exagorazo*, the idea is to completely buy out, or to seize all of something completely. The Greek word for “time” is the word *kairos*, which refers to an opportunity or season when something is ripe for harvest (Hamel 1996).

In light of the entire context in which Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus, one can assume that living righteously and living in the light takes complete adherence to the Spirit of God. In application of this truth in regard to marriage, the Christian married couple ought to recognize that while the marriage union is for a season, it is a ripe season in which its opportunities ought to be completely utilized for the glory of God in kingdom building ventures, especially the opportunity to raise children in the peaceful unified home. Among such an endeavor, the help and power that the Holy Spirit affords each believer is poignant and necessary for marriage to flourish as it was designed by God Himself (Self and Self 1981, 93-95).

### **Defining Marital Satisfaction**

A common challenge that arises in this area of research is the concept surrounding the definition of marital satisfaction. In most literature on marital satisfaction, researchers use such concepts as “marital happiness,” “marital adjustment,” “marital satisfaction,” and “marital success” interchangeably. This has elicited criticisms regarding research reliability (Edmonds et al. 1967, 681). This problem will remain until

researchers produce operational definitions for these closely related concepts (Spanier 1973, 96).

Wesley Burr has sought to bring precision to many of his studies in order to distinguish satisfaction conceptually between several different aspects of marriage. He isolates selected areas and studies them separately. This allows for the researcher to identify a couple that may be experiencing high marital satisfaction in some areas, while experiencing low satisfaction in other areas. He notes that “this particular method of conceptualizing the dependent variable overcomes several limitations in the methods that have been used in most of the earlier research” (Burr 1970, 29).

Hicks and Platt have discussed the difficulties in conceptualizing and measuring marital satisfaction or happiness. They suggest that there are two alternative approaches to conceptualization. The first is to assess marital happiness as a global and subjective evaluation, and the other is to perceive satisfaction in relationship to specific aspects of married life (Hicks and Platt 1970).

### **Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale**

One such approach to measuring marital happiness involves a marital adjustment scale that focuses on various aspects of the relationship that have been presumed to be associated with marital satisfaction. In 1959, Locke and Wallace developed the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment and Prediction Test (L.W.M.A.T.) or also know as the Locke-Wallace Short Form. None of the previous measures of marital adjustment achieved the widespread acceptance and usage that the L.W.M.A.T. received (Broderick 1988, 575).

The Locke and Wallace used 48 subjects known to be maladjusted in marriage (defined for their study as person were divorced or separated, or current clients of the American Institute of Family Relations) who were then placed in dyads, by age and gender, with 48 persons who were judged to be well-adjusted in marriage by friends who knew them well. The mean adjustment score for the well-adjusted group was 135.9, whereas the mean score for the maladjusted group was only 71.1. This difference was significant with a critical ratio of 17.5. A reported 17% of the maladjusted group achieved scores of 100 or higher, while 96% of the well-adjusted group achieved scores of one hundred or higher. Locke and Wallace determined that these figures indicate that the L.W.M.A.S. was able to differentiate between persons who are well-adjusted in marriage from those who are not. Construct validity was further established through factor analysis of the final fifteen-item scale (Locke and Wallace 1959, 255).

### **Dyadic Adjustment Scale**

Today, the most widely used marital adjustment scale is the Dyadic Adjustment Scale developed by Graham Spanier in 1976. Building upon the Locke-Wallace Scale (1959), it not only uses all of the questions found in this earlier scale, but also focuses on four key aspects of the marriage relationship: (1) consensus—agreement on goals, values, and decision making; (2) satisfaction—a general sense of feeling positive about the relationship; (3) cohesion—working together on goals and projects in a unified manner; and (4) affection—being warm, affectionate, and responsive to each other (Spanier 1976, 18-20). In addition, Spanier correlated his scale with the L.W.M.A.S. for concurrent validity. The correlation was .86 between the two scales (Spanier 1976, 15).

These four identifiable dimensions of dyadic adjustment allow for the researcher to gain a snapshot view into the life of a couple's marriage at any given point. The *dyadic consensus* refers to the degree of couple agreement about such issues as family finances, life philosophies, household duties, and matters of recreation and religion. *Dyadic satisfaction* involves the frequency of quarreling, kissing or greeting one's mate with joy, confiding in one's mate, consideration of divorce, and the overall commitment to the success of the relationship. *Dyadic cohesion* refers to the manner in which the couple operates in unity in such areas of idea exchange, working together on a project, and sharing and participating in common interests. The fourth dimension measures *affectional expression* which taps into the couple's agreement and expressions of outward affection and sexual intercourse (Wilson and Filsinger 1986, 147-48).

Embedded in the 32 items of the DAS are ten which generate the Dyadic Satisfaction subscale. The majority of the items are answered by selecting from a six-point Likert scale in graduations of agreement and frequency. The scales run from the absolute polar opposites of "Always Agree" to "Always Disagree"; "All the Time" to "Never"; "Every Day" to "Never"; etc. One global assessment of happiness gives seven choices from "Extremely Unhappy" to "Perfect," with the mid-range descriptor being "Happy." Spanier notes that this middle descriptor most represents the degree of happiness in the average relationship (Spanier 1976).

### **Happiness as Satisfaction**

While "the right to the pursuit of happiness" is one of our nation's key freedoms, stated by the Continental Congress in 1776 in the Declaration of Independence, for most people the attainment of happiness is often dependent of the success of their

most intimate of personal relationships. This concept is elusive and difficult to measure (Cron 1994, 25). Marital happiness and satisfaction are often fluid concepts, and in process of change. L'Abate and Bagarozzi attempted to describe the state of marital satisfaction as being present in "relationships where a spouse is able to fulfill most, if not all, of his or her partner's needs, desires, expectations, and demands. . . . Marital dissatisfaction will be experienced whenever a spouse fails to gratify his or her mate in any of the aforementioned areas" (L'Abate and Bagarozzi 1993, 111).

**Institutional and companionship forms of happiness.** Family sociologists have postulated for decades that there are at least two views of "happiness" within marriage found in the United States alone: *the institutional* and *the companionship*. Other ethnic, religious, and cultural groups may diversify these phenomena even further. For example, in the institutional marriage, "adherence to traditional role specifications and customs would be the factors which would be most significant to the success or happiness of the marriage" (Hicks and Platt 1970, 555). Yet, conversely, a second type usually referred to as the companionship marriage places a greater emphasis on the affective aspects (i.e., expression of love, affection, sexual enjoyment, and companionship) of the marital relationship (Hicks and Platt 1970, 555). While one couple might score low on an instrument that measures institutional satisfaction, they might score high on a companionship satisfaction instrument. It is important to define how marital happiness and satisfaction are being measured in order to maintain validity in the body of research for this field of study.

**Life happiness.** Interest in the study of life happiness and quality of life in general has surged over the last several decades. While psychologists and other mental health professionals have long studied the relationship between happiness and psychological well-being, an increased amount of scholars from other disciplines are currently interested in happiness, well-being, and mental health as a predictor of job stability and medical insurance success, to name a few (Benin and Nienstedt 1985, 975).

Another research study in the area of marital satisfaction found that couples and families work together to create their own social reality in which they negotiate what is *normal* in their relationship, consequently attributing a differing understanding of marital satisfaction for every marriage. A narrative approach was used to ask qualitative questions in interviews to determine unique marital happiness. This creative and sensitive assessment allows for couples to extract the more intrinsic meanings of marital satisfaction in contrast to some of the more extrinsically motivated instruments. However this methodology is impractical for large populations and is difficult to norm (Crohan and Verhoff 1989, 377-78).

### **Marriage and Divorce Trends**

There has been a steady rise in the age at marriage and a conversely steady decline in the marriage rate over the past thirty-five years. An older rise in marriage age is associated with the rising levels of educational attainment for both men and women, as well as career development. In addition, in the United States, there has been a drastic rise in never-married adults (in their late 20s), which has almost quadrupled (38%) since the year 1967 (9%) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2006). In general, fewer marriages are being formed and are more fragile than in the past. This was opposite from what most

researchers predicted. It was argued that since the age of marriage had increased, so too would maturation of the adults, thus preparing them for more success and longevity in marriage. However, since the late 1980s the divorce rate continues to remain at approximately 50% (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2006).

In response to these trends, and the further observation that many adults will spend almost half of their lives unmarried, Davis and van den Oever (1982) suggest that marriage is “falling out of fashion.” Furthermore, marriage, divorce, and remarriage trends are indicators of a society that lacks the ability to pledge itself to long-term commitments, in order to indulge in individual freedom and self-indulgence (Davis and van den Oever, 1982, 510).

### **Period Effects**

Some scholars believe that since there has been a growth of individualistic values in U.S. culture and the fact that divorce is readily available, individualistic spouses may invest little or no effort into resolving disagreements, thus eroding relationship quality and stability. Because society as a whole has become less hospitable to marriage, some decline in marital quality within recent longitudinal studies may reflect *period effects* as opposed to data that is intrinsic to the marriage process itself (VanLaningham, Johnson, and Amato 2001, 1319).

Period effects may alter marital happiness perception, but not necessarily affect what is central to marital satisfaction intrinsically. Issues such as the decline of men’s real wages and the economic hardship this has placed on marriages/families, the rise in labor-force participation among mothers, gender roles both in society and in the home, and cultural values in general. Although longitudinal studies offer the greatest reliability

of data gathering, it is somewhat difficult to compare the results across several decades of period effects without corrupting the research validity (VanLaningham et al. 2001, 319).

### **Child-Rearing**

Research continues to show that half of all divorces occur within the first seven years of marriage (Cherlin 1981, 2), and with one third of all divorces occurring within the first five years of marriage (National Center for Health Statistics 1991). In many of these couples, the path toward divorce begins with the decline of the wife's marital satisfaction upon the arrival of the first baby (Shapiro, Gottman, and Carrere 2000, 59).

Bearing children and raising a family only increase one's level of long-term commitments. It is questionable, from a research position, if parenthood is also falling out of fashion, yet, the fact remains that when marriages turn sour they can be terminated more easily than when children are involved. For the divorced couple, the *family* is essentially encountering a divorce with life-long consequences. Even in the case of remarriage, the divorced parent is tied emotionally, physically, and often financially to his or her former family unit. Many demographers today would note that later marriage age is also being followed by a lower fertility rate, as later generations have lived through the often devastating effects of marital and familial divorce and may be more cautious in regards to such a commitment (Rossi 1987, 40-41).

As early as the 1950s researchers identified that the transition to parenthood as one of the married couple's most difficult adjustment stressors. In addition, the majority of research in this area to date has found that, as married couple's transition into parenthood there is a drastic decrease in positive marital changes, and an increase in marital conflict and thus an abrupt decline in marital satisfaction. Most of the research

notes that the marital dissatisfaction in wives, however, the wife's declining marital satisfaction was also the eventual lead indicator of the husband's later declining marital satisfaction (Belsky et al. 1983, 570).

Not all couples experience decreased levels of marital satisfaction as they become parents and therefore there is hope that researchers will be able to identify at the very early stages of marriage what buffers kept the marriage from declining toward divorce. In a study conducted by Feldman, although marital satisfaction decreased in 43% of couples who were new parents, marital satisfaction did remain stable in 39%, and even 18% of the couples experienced an increase in marital satisfaction (Cowan and Cowan, 1995, 418).

It is also interesting to note that remaining childless does not ensure marital stability or satisfaction in itself. Cowan and Cowan reported a 50% divorce rate for couples who remained childless as opposed to a 25% divorce rate for those who became parents. This is significant in light of the research that overwhelmingly highlights the stress factors of entering the parental stages of marriage and family (Cowan and Cowan 1992, 4).

### **Historical Review of Research on Marital Satisfaction**

Early studies of marital happiness and stability were mostly theoretical with few hypotheses to investigate. When studies did contribute more to the field than curiosity or personal hunches, they randomly borrowed from the other relevant contributions of related disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and social psychology. It has only been in the past few decades that the investigation into the theoretical

constructs of marriage and family, has become a distinct discipline in itself (Hicks and Platt 1970, 554).

### **Early Century Research**

Marriage quality research and its relationship to the family life cycle, date back to the early 1900s in a study by Katherine Bennet Davis (Anthony 1993, 98). The earliest empirical studies conducted on marital satisfaction investigated the relationship between sexual relations and marital satisfaction of married women. Yet, the most significant and most widely used instruments to measure what was then known as, “marital adjustment,” were developed in the 1930s and 1940s by Burgess and Cotterell. Prior to this, Burgess had been conducting marital harmony research studies, while Cotterell’s article on “Roles and Marital Adjustment” was published in 1933. The two combined their efforts in 1936 by conducting and publishing a grand study of 526 married couples (Burgess and Cotterell 1936, 737-51).

Kelly investigated the marital adjustment of recently married adults and followed up with more research from their marriages. Utilizing both physical and psychological measurements to predict marital happiness, he was able to create a clear picture of one of the first longitudinal studies. By 1937 he had collected data from over 300 married couples (Kelly 1937).

Clifford Kirkpatrick is thought to have been the first individual to attempt to empirically test Freud’s hypotheses regarding family issues. His “Statistical Analysis of Psychoanalytic Theory of Mate Selection” was produced in 1937. Other contributions from Kirkpatrick include the “Community of Interest and the Measurement of Marriage

Adjustment” in 1939, and the “Family Interest Scale” which measured marital adjustment (Kirkpatrick 1937).

In 1939, Burgess and Cottrell introduced the concept of the marital “success” type variable. In this method, several conceptually distinct phenomena such as consensus, permanence, happiness, and specific behavior patterns such as, who give into whom, are grouped together in one concept. However, in this form of study, the research must predefine the criterion by which successful marital satisfaction would be assessed (Burr 1970, 29).

### **Mid-Century Research**

Throughout the 1940s, prediction of marital happiness became the focus of sociological research. Mowrer writes, “Prediction studies dominate the area of statistical analysis, just as studies of personality adjustment in family relations dominate the area of case histories” (Mowrer 1941, 510). In 1950, Homans found that the more frequently two married persons interacted with each other, the greater their affection for one another was (Homans 1950, 241). Later, Kingston and Nock argued that although the absolute amount of time a couple spends together may provide a *positive* interaction, there is nothing in Homan’s study to suggest that the time spent together has any effect on the *quality* of that interaction (Kingston and Nock 1987, 31). One other notable contribution in the 1950’s was the development of the 29-item “Marital Adjustment Test” by Herbert Locke. This scale outlived most of the earlier ones that had been in circulation until this time (Strauss 1978, 67).

In 1955, Frumkin asserted from his research, factors in a successful marriage were found in conservative or traditional partners find themselves the most satisfied in

marriage since marriage is a rather conventional institution. This, however, does not account for the factors involved in successful and satisfying marriages of unconventional people.

Wallin examined the relationship between religious orientation and the sexual gratification and marital satisfaction among married couples (Wallin 1957, 300-05). In the same year, Lee and Burchinal used the Burgess-Cotterell-Wallin Marital Adjustment Scale to confirm their hypothesis that couples who attend church regularly have a significantly higher score of marital satisfaction than do those who do not attend church (Lee and Burchinal 1957, 306-10).

In 1959, Locke and Wallace developed the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment and Prediction Test (L.W.M.A.T.) or also know as the Locke-Wallace Short Form. None of the previous measures of marital adjustment achieved the widespread acceptance and usage that the L.W.M.A.T. received (Broderick 1988, 575).

The concept of marital adjustment took a prominent place in research literature during the 1960s. Spanier acknowledges that it was probably the single most frequently studied dependent variable in the field during that time (Spanier 1976, 15).

In a research study including 781 working husbands and 957 working wives, Orden and Bradburn found that both partners reported lower levels of marital satisfaction if the wife worked due to economic necessity (Orden and Bradburn 1960). Later, Paris and Paris found that satisfied couples tended to score a decrease in marital satisfaction over time, while unsatisfied couples tended to score an increase in marital satisfaction (Paris 1966). Research in the late 1960s by Hicks and Platt noted the first U-shaped

relationship to satisfaction over time, which displayed itself high in the beginning and later years with a decline in the middle years (Hicks and Platt 1970).

There is also some interesting research in regard to marital satisfaction and childrearing. Research in the 1960s found that the presence of children correlated with a decline in marital satisfaction. Feldman using longitudinal data reported a decrease marital satisfaction immediately after the birth of the first child, with the greatest decreases occurring in those couples who had originally reported the highest satisfaction (Feldman 1971). In contrast, the low marital satisfaction couples noted that their children were the only source of mutual satisfaction that they shared and it kept their marriage warm and loving (Bain, 1978, 680). Gutman noted that couples were close before and after childrearing years but were not close during the childrearing years (Guman 1975).

### **Research in the 1970s**

During the 1970s there were more than 150 articles published in the area of marital satisfaction and/or adjustment, and 182 American doctoral dissertations that included marital satisfaction and/or adjustment as one of its variables. An examination of these materials by Spanier and Lewis found the following trends:

1. Studies increasingly included men (husbands) in their sample. Prior to the 1970s men were being omitted, if not ignored.
2. There was greater attention to methodological issues in the use of measures of marital quality.
3. Sample sizes were generally larger in the published literature of the 1970s as compared to the 1960s.
4. There was a growing interest in studying cohabitating couples either as a variation in marital structure, or as an extension of the courtship process.

5. There was an increasing use of multivariate statistics for data analysis on marital quality.
6. There was more extensive consideration to research design, particularly issues involving the cross-sectional studies of marriage.
7. There was a growing awareness of the traditional biases in the portrayal of male and female roles, which existed in the literature prior to the 1970s.
8. There was an unprecedented effort to synthesize the body of literature pertaining to marital quality.
9. Although there had been little research conducted prior to this decade, there was a developing interest in the use of indicators of marital quality as an independent variable.
10. The visibility of research increased outside of North America (Spanier and Lewis 1980, 826-27).

Cutright analyzed data from the 1960 census of married males living with their first spouse as a tool to measure marital stability. After assessment, Cutright found that it was earnings not education that showed a positive relationship with stability. It was concluded that the relationship of stability with prestige was a function of the varying levels of earnings within occupational groups, rather than being a product of prestige alone. However, neither education nor occupation had positive effects independent of their association with earnings. There is some question of using the measurement of stability as equivalent to satisfaction, although Cutright assumed a corresponding level (Cutright 1971).

Also focused on earnings, Jamrozy compared and contrasted the communication processes of married couples in high and low marital adjustment in middle and low socio-economic groups. Research results showed that subjects of middle socio-economic status exhibited more effective communication than low socio-economic status subjects. Also, the poorest communicators were couple of low socio-economic

status and low marital adjustment (Jamrozy 1976). Glenn and Weaver examined the relationship between marital satisfaction and the variables of family income and there was no significant relationship between satisfaction in marriage and income (Glenn and Weaver 1978).

### **Late-Century Research**

Research conducted in the 1980s was diverse and thorough. The additional possible relationships added diversity and the adding of dependent variables made the research more thorough than in previous years. For example, DeMaris and Leslie researched cohabitating adults who eventually married, and found that cohabitators scored significantly lower in both perceived quality of marital communication and satisfaction (DeMaris and Leslie 1984, 83). Swenson and Haug examined the possible bond between the level of commitment and the length of time a couple had been married (Swenson and Haug 1985). In addition to their confirmation of Rollins and Cannon's earlier finding that marital satisfaction declined slowly over time, they also found that if the commitment expressed in the relationship was to the institution of marriage itself, rather than merely to the spouse, then the relationship grew and improved. They found that as long as this attitude was present in the marital union, a corresponding increase in marital satisfaction would occur (Rollins and Cannon 1974, 944).

Edman found support for the hypothesized relationship that balanced cohesion and adaptability is related to higher levels of marital satisfaction (Edman 1985). Sefton also found the relationship between married couples and their perceived level of adaptability and cohesion significant (Sefton 1985). Lee observed marital satisfaction in the later years of marriage and discovered that the length of marriage was not

significantly related to marital satisfaction. The strongest positive correlate, for both men and women, was the friendship interaction. It was also found that having children at home is negatively correlated to marital satisfaction (Lee 1988, 778).

Ortega et al. hypothesized that persons sharing similar value systems would adjust more easily in marriage and thereby experience higher levels of marital satisfaction. In their study of 276 married Catholics and 794 married Protestants (from five denominational groupings) revealed surprising results. In their sample the findings showed that there was not a significant statistical difference between homogenous and heterogamous marriages (Ortega et al. 1988). This study led to the next several decades of studies on the area of religiosity and marital satisfaction. In one study by Anthony, it was found that the most compatible marriage partners were those who had no religious orientation at all, followed by like-minded religious orientation, and those with the lowest scores, were dyads who were completely “unequally yoked” (Anthony 1991,122).

Gottman measured the specific link between conflict (a part of adaptability) and marital satisfaction, and attempted to use his research as a way to salvage deteriorating marriages before inevitable divorce occurred (Gottman 1994). Bradbury, Fincham, and Beach published their insights from the decade of the 1990s, highlighting the nature and determinants found in this ten-year span of research in the area of marital satisfaction. These were their insights in summation:

1. The decade of the 1990s displayed the American divorce rate (in percentages of society) declining for eight years in a row.
2. There was also a sharp increase in the age at first marriage.
3. Research showed that the level of satisfaction in first marriages has declined since the mid-1970s.

4. An understanding for researchers that data is only as good as the honesty of the respondents. A new awareness for being able to measure how married people behave as opposed to only what they say became a focus for further research.
5. Interest in understanding interpersonal process in marriage remained strong.
6. An awareness to better understand research trends from former decades was evident.
7. Researchers realized the need to capture interdependencies between husband and wife behavior, as distinct from the raw number.
8. A realization of the need to replicate studies with further theoretical development.
9. An increase on research on the interpersonal processes in marriage that focuses heavily on conflict and problem solving.
10. An increased understanding on the interpersonal process in which violence is part of the marriage union.
11. Research suggesting that children have a paradoxical effect of increasing the stability of marriage, at least while the children are relatively young, yet, decrease its quality (Bradbury et al. 2000, 964-69).

Specific dysfunctional schemas have also been correlated more highly with high marital dissatisfaction than others. Bausom, Epstein, and Rankin further highlight some of the specific interpersonal attributions and maintaining behaviors mentioned in earlier research. These authors suggest that dissatisfied couples tend to use fewer relationship enhancing explanations for events than satisfied couples. These explanations include expectancies, assumptions, and generalized standards. In dissatisfied marriages, expectancies indicate that negative behaviors are predicted for the future, and assumptions about change demonstrate that relational transformation is seen as unlikely (Bausom et al. 1995, 144).

Markman, Stanley, and Blumber also stress the importance of beliefs in marital adjustment. The authors suggest four primary patterns that negatively impact relationships including: escalation, invalidation, withdrawal/avoidance, and negative

interpretations. The negative interpretations primarily refer to erroneous assumptions about the spouse's motivation for behavior and the tendency to selectively attend to evidence that confirms these beliefs. These authors also stress the importance of a shared value system and shared religious orientation for a satisfying marriage (Markman et al. 1994, 23).

### **Long Term Marriage Studies**

Few studies have directly studied long-term marriages in order to identify factors that may account for an enduring relationship. However, three in particular begin to bring some insight into this area of marital stability. One significant longitudinal study was conducted by Pineo on couples who were inventoried upon engagement, again after five years, and a third time after twenty years. This study suggested a general and gradual decline in marital satisfaction (Pineo 1961).

Sporakowdki and Hughston surveyed 40 couples who had been married for 50 years. What they found of the long-term couples was similar to those who were satisfied at earlier stages of marriage. They scored high on the Locke-Wallace scale and tended to have similar perceptions regarding the state of their marriage (Sporakowdki and Hughston 1978).

Roberts surveyed 55 couples who have been married an average of 55.5 years. These couples indicated that there were three main characteristics to their enduring relationship: commitment, companionship, and caring. It seems likely that the kinds of factors that contribute to marital satisfaction at any stage of the relationship are also important to stability (Roberts 1979). Also in 1979, Lewis and Spanier suggested that marital quality was the primary factor in marital stability (Lewis and Spanier 1979, 288).

The possible predictors of marital adjustment are numerous and varied and it is virtually impossible to conduct a complete analysis in any one given study. Because of this, many studies must be done in order to put all the varied pieces together into a comprehensive body of work and theory development. The process then becomes to compare the relative contribution of each independent variable within the security of secure definitions and constructs (Filsinger and Wilson 1984, 663).

### **Theory Development for Marital Satisfaction Research**

It is interesting to note that among the hundreds of dissertations on this subject and the thousands of scholarly articles published, there is no unifying theory for marital satisfaction research. By definition, theory is “a statement of the way in which abstract variables are related to each other and from which verifiable hypotheses are deduced” (Lewis and Spanier 1979, 259). “Unfortunately, researchers have been unable to operationalize the construct in a manner that is unambiguous and widely accepted. Marital quality has been defined as both a unidimensional and a multidimensional construct” (Glenn, 1990 820; Norton 1983, 145). Although this field of study operates without one unifying theory, there is an abundance of work that has been done on theory development following the models of “field theory” and “social exchange theory”.

#### **Field Theory**

Contributing to the field theory, Kurt Lewin suggested that *behavior* is a function of the person within his or her environment  $[B = f(P, E)]$ . Clifford Swenson built upon this formula by stating that a *relationship* is a function of the interaction between two persons and their environment or situation  $[Relationship = f(\text{person 1,}$

person 2 ) Situation ]. Following this formula as a model, multivariate research on marital satisfaction can be done (Swenson, Eskew, and Kohlhepp 1981, 841). This type of theorizing is helpful to the researcher in that it points out the importance of identifying various personal and situational variables that might impact a relationship, as well as hypothesizing about the relationship itself (Bessac 1986, 6).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

George Levinger did extensive early research in the area of marital cohesiveness and this concept of the social exchange theory. In his research, Levinger studied the inducements which encouraged members to remain in the “group” in contrast to the inducements which encouraged members to leave the “group.” In marriage, he studied the strength of the marriage as a way to describe the attractiveness to remain in the marriage as opposed to a weak marriage which was in danger of dissolution due to the barriers or inducements pressing in on it (Levinger 1965, 19). Levinger categorized marital relationships into three categories: (1) “full shell”—which is characterized by strong attractions within and strong boundaries from without; (2) “no shell”—which describes a marriage in dissolution due to disconnection and partners living separate lives; and, (3) “empty shell”—which is the condition where togetherness in marriage is maintained primarily due to the strong barriers opposing dissolution of the marriage (Levinger 1965, 20).

While the distinctions within each category may be difficult to discern clinically, when observed in each one’s environment, the effects become better understood. Consider William Goode’s case study on an “empty shell” marriage:

The atmosphere is without laughter or fun, and a sullen gloom pervades the household. Members do not discuss their problems or experiences with each other, and communication is kept to a minimum. . . . Their rationalization for avoiding a divorce is, on the part of one or both, "sacrifice for the children," "neighborhood respectability," and religious convictions that divorce is morally wrong. . . . The hostility in such a home is great, but arguments focus on the small issues, not the large ones. Facing the latter would, of course, lead directly to separation or divorce, but the couple has decided that staying together overrides other values, including each other's happiness and the psychological health of their children. (Merton and Nisbet 1961, 441-42)

This illustration of an empty shell marriage evokes the contrasting images of how the full and no shell families might operate. The full shell marriage would show partners where attraction was strong, but one which also had strength in boundaries from outside inducements. The no shell couple would be described of partners who are disconnected individuals living separate yet complete and autonomous, lives. Goode's example illustrates two underlying continua: fullness-emptiness of attraction and strength-weakness of boundaries (Levinger 1965, 20).

In studying marriage, high cohesiveness is harder to determine than low cohesiveness. The sheer privacy of the marital relationship prevents outside judgments to perceive how "truly happy" a couple may be, even to insiders, the spouses often find it difficult to discuss how they really feel about their condition in empirical terms. On the other hand, extremes of low cohesiveness in marriage often lead to divorce, and once divorce occurs, the research of those dissolutions can be studied to give further applications to the current body of research (Levinger 1965, 20-21).

The social exchange theory was enhanced when Robert Lewis and Graham Spanier developed "a number of theoretical propositions to aid in the understanding of the complex interrelationship of the numerous variables related to marital quality and stability. Each relationship is composed of the interaction of resources, rewards, and

costs” (Bessac 1986, 6). Thus, the term social exchange becomes the essence of how marital quality is influenced by premarital, economic, interpersonal, and social factors. A marriage relationship is fluid and always being influenced by internal attractions, intra-dyadic tensions, external pressures, and alternative attractions outside of the marriage (Lewis and Spanier 1979, 269).

### **Interrelated Subsystems in Satisfaction**

One area of current interest in the area of family psychology is the processes by which the family life is regulated. From a structural perspective, the family life of most people who are married revolves around two distinct subsystems: the parental subsystem which revolves around the parent/child relationship and the marital subsystem which is relevant to the husband/wife relationship. Some recent research has shown that there is a more increasing link between this subsystem than originally thought (Erel and Burman 1995, 110).

Erel and Burman found that due to the positive relationship between the two familial subsystems, there is a spillover effect from one subsystem to the other. One important implication from this research is that troubled marital relationships are likely to coexist with troubled parent-child relationships (Erel and Burman 1995, 121). However, there were at least three important limitations to this body of data thus far.

**Limitations in subsystem research.** The first is that there has been little consistency in how each subsystem’s quality has been assessed. There are at least six definitions of family quality in regards to parenting which include satisfaction, family cohesion, consistency, covert control, discipline, and within-parent consistency. There

are at least three operational definitions for marital quality including satisfaction, overt conflict, and marital coalition). Few researchers have assessed these subsystems consistently with the same operational definition (Kurdek 1996, 331).

The second limitation in this correlational data is that researchers rarely have focused on the quality of the parenting and marital subsystems within the same family, and thus far have not assessed such spillover effects within the same studies interdependently. In addition, research on differences between mother and father quality differences might be helpful in gaining further understanding in this area. The third limitation is that research has yet to determine that if indeed spillover occurs, whether or not this effect changes the quality of either one of the parental or marital subsystem (Kurdek 1996, 332).

While studies regarding parental satisfaction and marital satisfaction continue to be addressed, the issues surrounding cohesiveness expand beyond that of satisfaction. Cohesion also identifies *how* a family operates within its relationships. Certain factors within family cohesion can be isolated and understood within the greater context of the interpersonal relationships. Yet, what the subsystem research gives this body of research is the link between the two familial units that coexist together in one home. Continued research needs to be conducted to determine to what extent each of the variables interrelates to the other.

### **Family Cohesion Theory Development**

Despite the importance of parenthood to the individuals who occupy this role, sociological research has paid little attention to the satisfaction of their family life. While job and marriage satisfaction has been studied at length, not much has been addressed in

the area of parenthood satisfaction, or its detriments or benefits. This lack of interest in the area of research may be due in part that unlike marriage or job satisfaction, parenting satisfaction is less likely to predict tenure in that role. While scholars have treated marital happiness as a stand alone entity, parenting experiences within the family structure can have effects on marital quality (Rogers and White 1998, 293).

Family cohesion has developed as the social context of the family has been affected by the nature of the residence in which the child is reared. The traditional context was one in which most children in the past grew up in extended households. In this type of household more than two generations are living together under one roof (Vinovskis 1987, 296). In this situation, family cohesion took into consideration the interplay between grandchildren and grandparents and two sets of children/parent relationships as well as the original marital relationship. Such complexity was often not researched in terms of cohesion and satisfaction, as individual considerations of happiness or even romantic love were subservient to the need to protect the long-term interests of the family lineage and survival. Interestingly, it is viewed that relationships within the original nuclear family were not much more cohesive than those with neighbors, colleagues, other relatives, or friends (Vinovskis 1987, 297-98).

### **Historical Development**

If one traces the family unit from the medieval period until as far as the nineteenth century, the domesticated nuclear family is not always clear or even agreed upon by definition. Thus, the close-knit affective type, in which researchers now define as the nuclear family (which is the more prevalent terminology today), is really only the latest stage in a longer evolution of the family in the past 500 years. Most of these

change stages occurred outside of the United States' history, in part because that when the New World began, the smaller domesticated nuclear family was already prevalent in England, and therefore transferred with those who immigrated west (Vinovskis 1987, 298-99).

In addition to the development of the smaller nuclear family, the parents have also been assigned the primary responsibility of the care, education, and socialization of their children. However, they have not always provided for these services themselves. Increasingly, such services were outsourced by schools, churches, and specialized institutions (Demos 1982, 435-40). When women as mothers had economic pressures, often older siblings would raise young children or wet nurses were hired to nurse the infants. The family today is more self-centered than its historical counterpart, in addition, this self-centeredness has not necessarily allowed for more cohesion and less outsourcing. With family members finding more roles and resources outside the family unit itself, the result has been fragmentation in the familial interpersonal relationships (Vinovskis 1987, 308).

**Early work.** The pioneers in family therapy were predominantly psychoanalytically trained psychiatrists who worked with cases of schizophreniacs. According to Vincent Foley these therapists produced a variety of useful conceptualizations under various labels that have now become the core ideas in family therapy (Foley 1979, 465). One of these concepts is the idea of family cohesion.

Simon, Stierlin, and Wynne became the first to observe cohesion from the pseudomutuality and pseudohostility of schizophrenic's families. Pseudomutuality is an extreme form of family togetherness and is a false kind of closeness that is replicated in

many family structures outside of schizophrenic type homes. In contrast to healthy and functioning families, these families display rigidity of structure and role assignments and any deviation from this provokes extreme anxiety over the possible distance that they encounter when not in control of one's proximity (Simon et al. 1985, 272).

It was Stierlin who was the first to introduce two opposing forces in family relationships, that he termed centripetal (pulling families together) and centrifugal (pulling families apart). With these concepts he also depicted two different family types that occurred when adolescents separated from their parents. These patterns produce reflect forces in the family that were classified as either inward or outward. Centripetal forces exert an unusual attraction for the adolescent to the parents and the family, while centrifugal forces have the opposite effect. The adolescent avoids attraction to the family and concurrently becomes more attached to peers and outside adult influencers (Simon et al. 1985, 32).

The furtherance of this work led to the model of adolescent separation processes, as Stierlin placed more emphasis on the forces of *binding* and *expelling*. These forces ultimately determine whether the process of individualization can be attained or not. The centrifugal and centripetal concepts are used in the Beaver's System Model as the central dimensions in its descriptors of various family systems (Simon et al. 1985, 33).

While specific operational definitions differ, the concept of cohesion is understood across the social sciences as a unifying dimension (Olson et al. 1979). Although cohesion has been relevant for decades to the social scientists, more recently is has become important to family therapists who have formulated concepts related to this

dimension. Family therapists have identified the extreme ends of this concept, and have concluded that a balance is needed for marriages to operate effectively. This balance is found between too much cohesion (which leads to enmeshed systems) and not enough closeness (which leads to disengaged systems). Furthermore, Olson reports that when the level of cohesion is very high, there is over identification and individuation is de-emphasized. In this scenario, consensus and loyalty are primary. Yet, when cohesion is low, individual autonomy is encouraged, with attachment and commitment de-emphasized (Olson et al. 1983).

Beavers and Voeller expanded on Stierlin's concepts to describe centripetal and centrifugal family forces which are similar to cohesion. Centripetal families view their most satisfying relationships as those which come from within the family structure, almost excluding the outside world. In contrast, centrifugal families view the outside world as providing rewarding and enriching relationships, while those within the family structure being less satisfying (Beavers and Voeller 1983, 91).

**Group therapists.** Therapists working with small groups have also found cohesion useful in describing member interaction. Evans and Jarvis believe that cohesion plays a major role in the group dynamic development and group therapy research (Evans and Jarvis 1980, 359). They view group cohesion as being both a positive and negative force within the group's experience. While the positive attributes contribute to more investment, more commitment to work through conflict, and a sense of security, the negative attributes include being more concerned with the group in itself than the objective for why the group exists. This may also cause members to have difficulty

confronting negative aspects within the group or to be overly influenced by the thoughts and feelings of other group members (Evans and Jarvis 1980, 367-68).

Some group therapists explain cohesion by its effects on the interpersonal relationship itself. For instance, Heap has identified group cohesion as the intense bonds between group members (Heap 1978). Corey views cohesion as a necessary component to the success of a group's interaction, attendance, and care among members (Corey 1982). Yalom links cohesion to relationships and describes it as the most therapeutic factor in a group (Yalom 1985). Finally, Luft depicts cohesion as the motivation group members have to work toward agreed upon goals and objectives (Luft 1984).

**Social psychologists.** Social psychologists interested in the family as a small group have studied the affects of cohesion. George Levinger applied the constructs of group cohesiveness to marital relationships to develop the social exchange theory of marital satisfaction. He described marital strength in regards to the social and psychological attractions within marriage in contrast to the outward pull of alternative relationships outside of marriage. Rather than describing couples merely from a single variable construct, there is conceptual and empirical value in developing "typologies" (Olson et al. 1979, 6).

The term cohesiveness is drawn from a physical analogy. Levinger explains that "the cohesiveness of a physical bond between two nuclei in a molecule may be indicated by the amount of energy required to break it" (Levinger 1965, 20). The physical model however, assumes mutuality in the forces among the nuclei, whereas the social model, as found in marriage, cannot assume such mutuality. In marriage, the feelings of one of the two partners may differ from the other. One spouse may consider

separation or divorce, while the other spouse remains fully bound in the relationship (Levinger 1965, 21).

Cuber and Harroff examined committed long-term relationships and different levels of emotional involvement. The relationships were defined as (1) conflict-habituated, centered on the struggle for power and avoidance of intimacy through conflict; (2) devitalized, with a deep emotional involvement which has been lost to the roles and responsibilities of raising a family; (3) passive-congenial, which begins like the devitalized relationship ends, i.e., the couple began their relationship absorbed in roles, and it therefore lacks intimacy and cohesion; (4) vital, which includes roles but also deep emotional bonding and sharing; the couple invests in their relationship as well as in their responsibilities; and (5) total, or an exaggeration of the vital, where the individuals have no separate identities; one person in the relationship can do nothing without the other person (Cuber and Harroff 1965, 13).

Other studies have identified cohesion as essential to the satisfaction and success of group members. Yalom found that cohesion was one of the essential therapeutic factors necessary to make a group succeed as a functional unit (Yalom 1970). Further, Oxford, in a study involving 92 couples in an alcohol treatment program, found cohesive marriages were twice as likely to have a favorable treatment outcome when compared to noncohesive marriages (Oxford et al. 1976).

Extremely high cohesion has been referred to as consensus sensitive (Reiss 1971), and enmeshment (Minuchin 1974). In addition to the earlier research, Druckman reported that families with extremely high cohesion scores were more likely to have juvenile delinquent offspring than families with low or moderate cohesion scores

(Druckman 1979). Extremely low cohesion has been described as pseudo-hostility (Wynne, et al. 1958), disengagement (Minuchin 1974), and even emotional divorce (Bowen 1960). Minuchin has maintained that a healthy balance between enmeshment and disengagement was the most therapeutic for a marriage or family's success (Minuchin 1974). The more balanced and moderate area of cohesion has also been described as mutuality (Wynne et al. 1958) and interdependence (Olson, 1972).

Kantor and Lehr noted that affective closeness continued to be a major indicator of marital satisfaction, and a goal within most marriages and family units. They found that fusion was defined as extreme emotional unity in which boundaries were diffused. Alienation occurred when marital or family members were locked into positions that made them unable to move or grow (Kantor and Lehr 1975, 12). Further, Napier described the two extremes of cohesion in relationships as a "rejected-intrusion pattern" of emotional abandonment or engulfment. In general, the literature has consistently supported the ideal of moderation in relationship cohesion within family members. Either extreme of this dimension has indicated an increase of individual and family dysfunction (Napier 1978, 5-6).

Rubin discussed an "approach-avoidance dance" in which both genders experience due to their fears and uncertainties concerning how to appropriately meet their intimacy needs. The study was conducted with open-ended interview questions and drew on clinical experience with 150 heterosexual couples who had lived together for at least five years and whose ages were between 25 and 55. From her research, Rubin concluded that these couples were searching for intimacy, companionship, sharing, communication,

and equality in their relationship, all of the components needed for strong cohesion (Rubin 1983, 115).

Lauer and Lauer studied 351 couples married 15 years or longer. They discovered the elements of an enduring and cohesive relationship is one that, “is composed of two changing people who are engaged in a changing relationship in a changing world. The way in which a couple manages those changes *together in cohesion* is crucial” (Lauer and Lauer 1986, 148). Lauer and Lauer recognized that adaptability and cohesion were inseparable in many cases.

### **Family Adaptability**

The dimension of adaptability toward change in individuals, couples, and families has been a widely researched topic. By definition, adaptability is “the ability of a marital or family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress (Olson et al. 1979, 6). Vincent postulated that adaptability in the family was the process of mediation which introduced changes from the larger society into the smaller family unit. An adaptive family system maintains a dynamic balance between these changes and family stability (Vincent 1966, 30). Hill found that changes that were too sudden or too radical caused the eventual breakdown of family structure and functioning (Hill 1971, 7).

**Morphostasis vs. morphogenesis.** Early theorists assumed that family systems sought to maintain homeostasis or equilibrium. Since most of the early research was conducted by family therapists on highly disturbed or dysfunctional families, later, theorists viewed this homeostatic approach as limiting and misleading (Speer 1979, 261).

Dell maintains there has been a movement in family systems theory to recognize that families utilize both morphostatic and morphogenic processes (Dell 1982, 21). Speer describes morphostasis as having a similar meaning to homeostasis, whereas morphogenesis encompasses the system-enhancing behavior that indicates growth, creativity, innovation, and change. These best represent the characteristics of healthy and functional family units (Speer 1979, 268).

Extremely high adaptability has been described as chaotic and lacking in structure. Vincent noted that when there are few limits in a system with highly fluid roles, a state of extreme disorganization arises. Often in this case, all parental control is lost and adaptability then becomes dysfunctional (Vincent 1966, 32). However, extremely low adaptability has been described as inflexible, rigid, and closed. Minuchin found that in this system, the family is so homeostatic and resistant to change that normal emotional growth stages do not occur in the members. The result is that when members are confronted with stress factors needing change or adaptation, pathology arises. Furthermore, the level of functionality of dysfunctionability in a family could be defined as morphostasis (response to change) and homeostasis (resistance to change) (Minuchin 1974, 61-65).

**Systems and change.** In 1972, Kieren and Tallman found that wives' adaptability was positively associated with husbands' marital happiness, but the husbands' adaptability seemed to have little effect on the wives' happiness. The authors interpreted this finding as a possible cultural norm for the times (1970s) in which adaptability skills were not expected male role behaviors (Kieren and Tallman 1972,

114). These findings are examples of gender differences in married couples, and may or may not be a reflection of today's woman seeking a more egalitarian marriage.

Balswick and Macrides measured the effectiveness of parenting practices, in which adaptability was highlighted, among 417 college students. They reported that moderation in adaptability led to the lesser degree of fostering rebellion in students, while the both extremes fostered greater rebellion in the students (Balswick and Macrides 1975, 254). Sprenkle and Olson also found that moderated adaptability in family structure was associated with adequate family functioning. In marriages in particular, a wife-dominant power structure did not promote the same level of healthiness, as both members needed to feel that the system was open and flexible in order to accommodate change and stress factors as they arose (Sprenkle and Olson 1979, 5).

The awareness of how family systems change is a critical contribution to family therapy. Referring to open and closed systems, Buckley describes a system's openness as being more than its engagement with one's environment. Rather, this interchange is an essential factor which underlies the system's ability to reproduce itself and adapt to change (Buckley 1967, 50).

This adaptability or change is the result of both positive and negative feedback. Foley refers to feedback as, "the process allowing the system to adjust itself. Negative feedback functions to correct deviation in a system and thus corrects disequilibrium. Positive feedback eliminates the system altogether by forcing change and therefore not allowing the system to return to its previous state" (Foley 1979, 362). Olson sees a family locked into a rigid morphostatic pattern will inevitably have problems as the

children grow. Healthy families understand change will occur and redefine rules as needed to grow (Olson 1983, 61).

Olson viewed the most viable family systems as those who fall between the two central levels of the adaptability dimension. They maintain that when there is more fluidity between morphogenesis and morphostasis there will be “. . . a mutually assertive style of communication, egalitarian leadership, role sharing, and roles making, with few implicit and more explicit rules” (Olson et al. 1983, 62).

Family theorist Wertheim agreed:

Without some optimal degree of morphostasis, the family system could not survive as a cohesive, viable social unit. Extreme morphogenesis, tantamount to constant change, would preclude building up of even a minimal set of common meanings, values and expectations, essential for communication and the survival of an intimate, face-to-face group. (Wertheim 1973, 365)

Beavers and Voeller have raised the issue of whether adaptability should be treated as a linear or curvilinear dimension. In the Circumplex Model, adaptability is considered as measuring systemic change on a continuum from morphostasis to morphogenesis. Viewed in this way, there is a curvilinear relationship between adaptability and systemic functioning. Too much or too little change is considered problematic for marital and family systems; the emphasis is on the dynamic balance between these extremes (Beavers and Voeller 1983, 86).

### **Research on Cohesion and Adaptability**

While both dimensions of cohesion and adaptability have each individually contributed to the field of understanding human relationships, the focus of this research is how the two interact together as one variable in marital satisfaction. One of the earliest studies utilizing both dimensions of cohesion and adaptability together was conducted on

families dealing with war separation and reunion. Hill used the term “dynamic stability” to refer to this new assessment of the interplay between these two structures. The overall measurement assessed how each family member reacted to the adjustments and consequences of war. He discovered that the best overall adjustment to separation and reunion was experienced by the medium-integration-high adaptability type of family. This study provided at least a partial support for the balance of these two dimensions (Hill 1949, 21).

### **The Circumplex Model**

The two dimensions of cohesion and adaptability have been combined by in a matrix, referred to as the Circumplex Model (see Figure 1). Attempts to validate the Circumplex Model empirically led to the development of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales (FACES). The original FACES scale was developed by Olson, Sprinkle, and Russell after a review of over fifty concepts found in the literature related to the constructs of cohesion, adaptability and communication (Olson 1983, 16). It first appeared in research literature in the late 1970s. It has had many permutations over the intervening years, too numerous to mention (Cron 1994, 45). However, in its original form, the FACES instrument was designed to test families in conflict, in order to provide a better treatment program for resolution. It was their intention to integrate the diverse theoretical and therapeutic models which were prevalent in describing families (Olson, 1983, 16).

Since its inception, it has undergone several revisions. The latest version, FACES III, is a 20-item scale developed from items used in a national survey conducted at the Family Social Science Center of the University of Minnesota by Olson et al. The

resulting scales were developed from a study of over one thousand families. FACES III can be administered to families across the family life cycle with a large variety in individuals. It assesses family cohesion and adaptability and allows the researcher to classify members into sixteen specific types (see Figure 1) or three more general types, which include balanced, mid-range, and extreme (Crouch 1993, 50-51).

This structural perspective has proven to be a valuable theoretical approach for understanding the family dynamics and interactions. Based upon a multidimensional approach, its theoretical construct identifies multiple factors that are seen as influencing cohesion among family members. The theoretical constructs which have been proposed as facilitative of adaptive coping behavior include the concepts of family modeling, family support systems, and balance within the family environment. Therefore, family characteristics such as family harmony, adaptability, communication style, and satisfaction with family life may directly affect the coping strategies of family members, and in so doing, mediate the level of individual and family stress (Olson et al. 1983, 56-60).

The Circumplex Model delineates four levels of cohesion, ranging from disengaged (very low), to separated (low to moderate) and connected (moderate to high), to enmeshed (very high). The central levels, separated and connected, are hypothesized to be the most favorable for family functioning, while the extremes of disengagement or enmeshment are generally seen as being problematic.

This model permits sixteen family types identified by utilizing the FACES III instrument, a 20-item scale containing 10 cohesion items and 10 adaptability items. Components measured within cohesion consist of issues such as emotional bonding,

decision-making, family boundaries, time, and friends. The adaptability construct measures components such as leadership, control, discipline, roles, and rules (Olson, 1991, 75-76). The Circumplex Model ultimately defines and displays the sixteen various family types from which those in the field of family psychology can help guide marriage partners in an assessment of present reality and a projected optimum future.

The focus of the Circumplex Model is on systemic concepts (i.e. the interrelationships of family members), not on any one individual within the system.

Russell and Olson have provided the following examples:

1. A concept of measuring cohesion is coalitions; coalitions with whom and excluding whom?
2. A concept of measuring adaptability is assertiveness; assertive toward whom?
3. A concept of measuring relationship is responsibility; to whom am I responsible?
4. A concept of measuring collaboration is cause and effect; the emphasis being more on maintaining collaboration rather than on who initiates it (Russell and Olson 1983, 30).

When the emphasis shifts from the individual to take the context of that individual's relationship into consideration, it is important to have a conceptual model that will illuminate relevant system factors and relationship types. The Circumplex Model is designed to be such a conceptual model. Its usefulness extends beyond the theoretical realm to include the clinical, as the model was originally designed for diagnosis, assessment, and treatment (Russell and Olson 1983, 43).

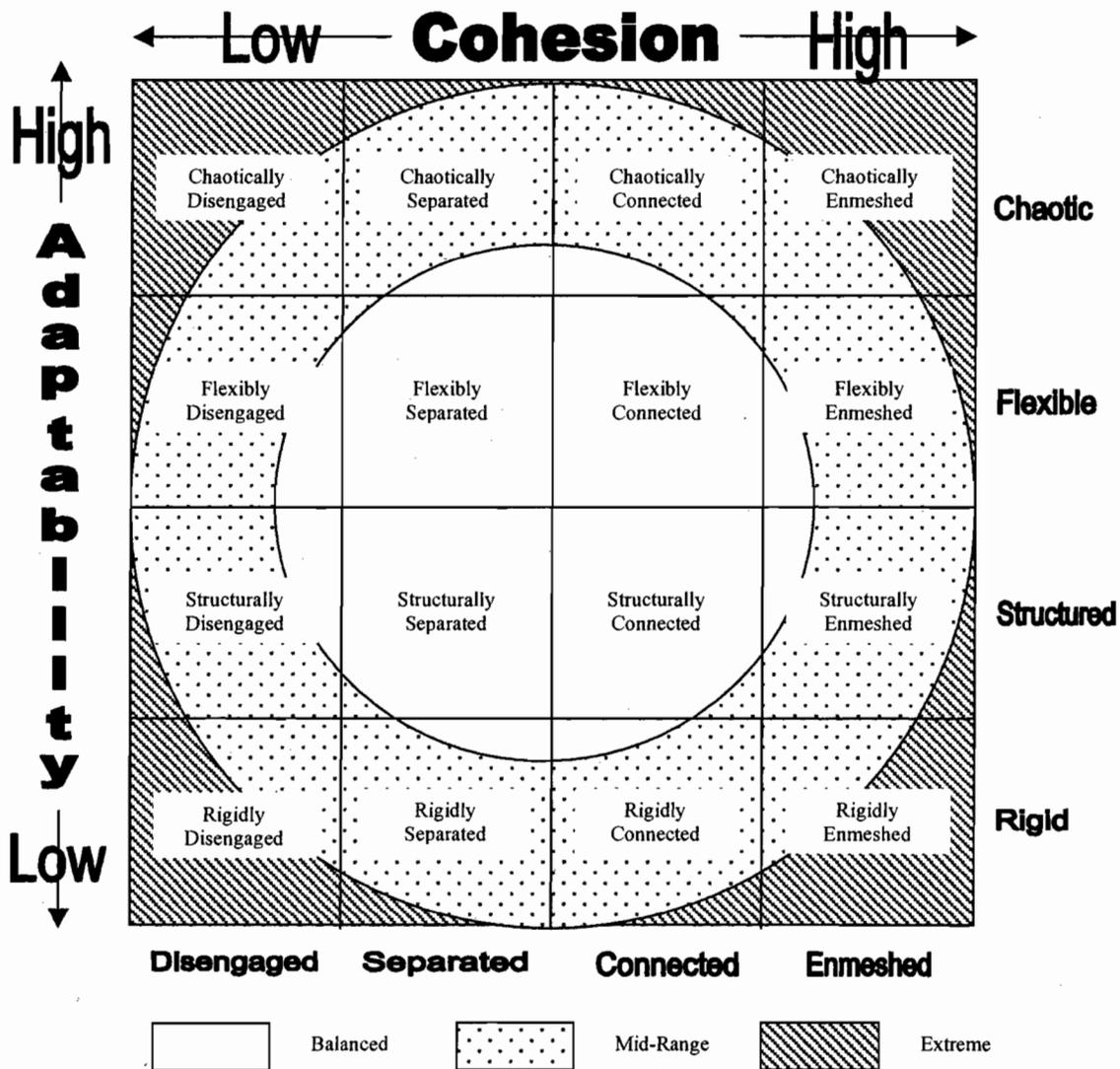


Figure 1. Circumplex Model (Olson et. al. 1983)

Often, it is postulated that scoring at the extremes of cohesion and adaptability was related to unhealthy functioning over time (Olson et al. 1979). However, many researchers have sought to take into consideration normative expectations and posit that extreme scores may not be considered problematic after all, as long as all system members shared those values. The researchers recognized overall that “it is less

important where the family falls in the Circumplex Model. . .than how they feel about the kind of family they have” (Olson et al. 1983, 74).

Consequently, couples can function at all of the extreme levels of cohesion and/or adaptability as long as both partners accept this behavior as normative. One of the assets of the Circumplex Model is that it identifies marital types while retaining the advantages of dimensions (Beavers and Voeller 1983, 91).

### **Family Life Cycle Theory Development**

Among the large body of research conducted on the subject of marital satisfaction, is the transition into parenting and the subsequent years of child-rearing that follow. A few longitudinal studies have been reported that focused explicitly on the transition to parenthood, and these include Meyerowitz and Feldman (1966, 78-84), Ryder (1973, 604-06), and Miller and Sollie (1980, 464-65).

In particular, the Miller and Sollie research data indicated a decline in marital quality over the transition period into parenthood and confirmed that this is a stressful period for many couples (Hobbs and Wimbish 1977, 680-81). Further research has found that not only the transition into parenthood is stressful upon marital satisfaction, but that the entire process over all of the life cycles are at risk of seeing a satisfaction decline. This can be, at least in part, a function of the increasing instrumental nature of marriage due to childcare, and the decreasing romantic and leisure nature of the early years of marriage (Belsky et al. 1983, 576).

The family cycle concept is important in helping marriages in crisis. It provides a conceptual and useful framework in ways that uses progressive stages whereby each stage builds upon previous stages. The family life cycle stages are marked

by changes in the age of children in the household and therefore subsequent changes in the marriage. As in other developmental stages, each stage of the cycle requires specific developmental tasks to be implemented in interpersonal relationships, and has inherent problems that marriages can expect. Using this type of categorization and assessment, couples have a better idea of what to expect in their marriage relationship over the life cycles (Haley 1973, 114-16).

### **The Effects of Mortality and Fertility**

In the late twentieth century, the marriage and family underwent a profound transformation in almost every part of the globe, as compared against the long history that preceded it. For most of that history, there was a precarious balance between fertility and mortality: life was short and death was a familiar event in the lives of infants and adults. Survival of the family unit depended upon a high fertility rate and the luck of both parents remaining alive without disease or injury (Rossi 1987, 31). Issues such as marital satisfaction become almost obsolete in developing countries and civilizations where survival consumes the individual and the family unit. Throughout much of history, the family unit is a source of stability and function rather than the ideal proposed in current western culture (Rossi 1987, 43).

With the current condition in western culture of increased fertility, decreased mortality, and healthy economics, the family unit of the twenty-first century will be a new phenomenon worthy of study and by which researchers may glean implications for the future. Certainly, the family is now faced with other risk factors such as overpopulation, stripped natural resources, energy crises, rural poverty, sexually

transmitted diseases, and of course divorce and the eventual breakdown of the nuclear family unit as it has been understood historically (Rossi 1987, 32-33).

### **Defining Life Cycle Stages**

A significant discovery revealed that back in 1890 one of the two parents in the family was likely to die before the last child married, whereas by 1940 the chances were 50/50 that the couple would still have eleven years to live together in their empty nest after their last child married and left the home (Glick 1955, 14). In the meantime, Duvall published the first edition of *Family Development* in 1957 and in it she identified and expanded the number of family life cycle stages.

Hill and Rodgers perceived that the changing roles of adults were determined by events during the life cycle stages than by age alone (Hill and Rodgers 1964). Some problems have arisen concerning life cycle staging according to events due in part to isolating the sequencing of events in marriages followed by divorce or remarriage (Norton 1980, 63). The family life cycle has also been more recently understood in the context of the amount, age, and spacing of children as a way to deal with the ever-changing dynamics of family structure (Glick 1988, 864).

### **Life Cycle Theory and Its Effect on Marital Satisfaction**

Available research indicates that change and reorganization occur in many areas of new parents' lives and these changes are potential stressors as well as opportunities for rewards and gratification. In this regard, most attention has been placed on the many changes occurring in couples' marital relationships over the transition into parenting and the subsequent transitions over the life cycles. Research is conflicting in

results from those that find modest declines in overall marital quality throughout the life cycles, to studies that show no change, to studies that show a gradual increase, to those cross-sectional studies which display the curvilinear pattern (Belsky et al. 1985, 855).

**Early research.** Lang at the University of Chicago conducted one of the first major studies on how marital satisfaction fluctuates over the life cycle. In this project, the investigators found that there was a slight and consistent decrease in marital satisfaction over a 16-year period (Lang 1932). The initial finding of a gradual decrease in “happiness” was later followed up by Pineo in 1961, in his analysis of the 20-year follow-up in the longitudinal study begun by Burgess and Wallin in 1953. These couples were first studied during engagement, again after five years of marriage, and then a third time after 20 years of marriage. Pineo’s data confirmed again that there was a gradual decline of marital satisfaction and adjustment. It should be noted that the way the word satisfaction was used during this time focused more on feelings of love and affection, as opposed to the more functional definition in current literature (Burr 1970, 30).

There have been other relevant, yet smaller studies in the early formation of life cycle development, of which Bossard and Boll’s study of large families. They found significant variations for the women, with the age group of 20-29 being relatively happier than the older ages. They summarize their case in the following manner:

Our case material, then, suggest the late forties and early fifties as a crisis period for many women: their children no longer retain their earlier dependence, their husbands are inadequate as sexual mates, and the menopause casts its passing shadows. . . .However the major frustrations and feelings of unhappiness tend to center around occupational rather than sexual matters. (Bossard and Boll 1955, 14)

In 1959, Deutscher published a study of 49 middle class couples in the post-parental stages of their life cycle. The findings from this research are helpful in that it aided researchers understanding of life cycle variations as they were able to contrast the feelings of the respondents based on earlier stages. Deutscher thought he would find a low satisfaction in this empty-nest condition, but rather discovered that his respondents considered their present condition as more satisfying than the previous stage of older children in the home (Burr 1970, 31).

The other major attempt to measure life cycle variations was conducted by Blood and Wolfe in 1960. In this study, they interviewed over 900 wives in an area probability sample of Detroit to investigate the way the wife's marital satisfaction varies over the life cycle. Blood and Wolfe also found the gradual decreases in satisfaction, like their predecessors, but also found that there was a slight rise in satisfaction immediately following the stage where the children left home, and then another decline in the retirement years (Burr 1970, 30).

Nock has argued that the family life cycle is more useful as a qualitative device as opposed to empirical evidence for marital satisfaction. Families tend to be placed in stages in the life cycle according to the values of variables such as length of marriage, presence and age of children that may actually have separate effects. His suggestion to use these distinct variables as components of a composite variable eliminates the possibility of making assumptions based on seeing these variables as having separate effects (Nock, 1979).

Medling and McCarrey found that couples in the early phase of the life cycle were also more preoccupied with more pragmatic and role-oriented aspects of their

relationship. During this early stage, each spouse is learning the different roles of being a husband or a wife, dealing with in-laws, financial concerns, setting up a household, and being an employee. The roles demand a fair amount of time and energy. These early times can also be periods of conflict and debate as the couple responds to stress and change (Medling and McCarrey 1981, 199). This research does not necessarily agree with the curvilinear hypothesis of a blissful beginning in marital union.

Furthermore, as the couple enters into the middle life cycle stage, new and differing roles may occupy their attention. The parenthood roles of child-rearing and further education seem to have the greatest impact on this stage. However, in contrast to this, they found that marriages in the later life cycle exhibit lower tensions from parent and occupational roles and gender roles have been sorted through in ways that bring a more satisfying and rewarding relationship. In this study, couples were perceived to have had a slight increase in marital satisfaction (Medling and McCarre 1981, 199). As mentioned before, the process of remaining married until the late stage life cycle in itself, without dissolution of marriage, may account for the harmony that older couples experience. In all, the need for further research is necessary in order to have greater understanding into the seasons of marriage and family.

A child might not always have negative effects on marital satisfaction. Hoffman and Manis found three examples of role satisfaction: parenthood is a gateway to adulthood for many people; it increases feelings of responsibility; and it produces feelings of fulfillment. The life cycle with the highest sense of "having fun" and feeling "satisfied" was found among parents with preschoolers. The Hoffman and Manis data

indicates that if children are planned and desired, they can indeed strengthen the marriage bond, instead of weakening it (Hoffman and Manis 1975, 456).

Mathis and Tanner researched cohesion, adaptability, and satisfaction in couples who were sixty-five and older. They found that later life couples were significantly more satisfied with their families than were couples from a national sample drawn from across other family life cycles. In addition, adaptability was so high that it is placed them in an unhealthy range according to the Circumplex Model. The cohesion scores were constant with the national sample (Mathis and Tanner 1991, 47).

**Longitudinal studies.** Until recent years these issues, particularly in regard to longitude, most studies were approached through cross-sectional data that was transposed into a projected trajectory of development. However, beginning in the 1950s and especially the 1960s, modern behavioral science began investing large amounts of time, energy, and resources into tracking behavior among all kinds of human (and animal) population cohorts, many of which represented the length of a generation or even a life span. For the first time information of the actual observation processes of change were able to be studied in their entirety. These naturalistic field studies provide a fresh perspective on parenthood and the life span (Lancaster et al. 1987, 2-4).

Pineo's pioneering longitudinal study, gave scholars a generally understood pattern of declining levels of marital happiness and satisfaction across at least the first 20 years of marriage (Pineo 1961). Ever since Pineo's groundbreaking longitudinal study, scholars have been aware of the generally understood pattern of declining levels of marital happiness, satisfaction across at least the first 20 years of marriage. The subsequent cross-sectional studies that followed almost uniformly confirmed the

existence of lower levels of marital satisfaction during the middle years of the family life cycle. However, the issue that remains unresolved is what occurs between the middle years and the later years of marriage. Some studies show a consistent decline, while others show an upward momentum rising toward the empty nest and retirement years (Lee 1988, 775).

There are no existing longitudinal studies that go beyond the 20<sup>th</sup> year in marriage to date, that follow large samples of married couples for significant periods of time. However, many of the cross-sectional studies do report that there are higher levels of happiness, satisfaction, or adjustment in the later years of marriage than in the middle years of the life cycle (Johnson et al. 1986; Anderson et al. 1983). On the other hand, research is not consistent on this issue. It is possible that the higher levels of perceived marital quality in the later stages can be attributed to the gradual attrition of the unhappily married due to divorce, from the cross-sectional samples of married couples (Lee 1988, 775).

**The curvilinear pattern.** Several studies have explored the possibility of a curvilinear pattern of marital satisfaction throughout the life cycle stages (Feldman and Feldman 1975; Spanier et al. 1975; Steinberg and Silverberg 1987). Many of these found that there was a curvilinear pattern of marital satisfaction declining steadily from the beginning of the marriage to the stage with school-aged children, leveling off during the parenting stage of adolescents, and recording the lowest level of satisfaction occurring in the late stage cycle. Although supporting a curvilinear model, Burr was the only researcher to find the lowest dip in the middle stage cycle (Burr 1970).

Opposite to these theorists, Valliant and Valliant found no such evidence to support the curvilinear theory. Certainly, there is still an abundance of information to be researched, discovered, and documented in this area of Family life cycles and its effect on marital happiness in order to have greater understanding of how marriages and families deal with stress factors during the child-rearing years (Valliant and Valliant 1993).

In other studies, researchers found that marital satisfaction increased in older couples who complete the child-rearing years, and remain married. There appears to be a U-shaped pattern of higher satisfaction for newly married couples and for couples in the empty nest and retirement stages of family life (Glenn 1990, 819). One study shows that the high marital satisfaction in later life may come from a sense of relief from the daily stressors of child-rearing as well as reducing other commitments, role conflicts, and time constraints and by increasing opportunities for companionship (White and Edwards 1990, 235). The majority of these studies have been cross-sectional by design.

It is important to note that few studies have followed couples from the middle years of marriage into the later years. Consequently, most longitudinal studies have been unable to conclude whether marital satisfaction improves, declines, or remains static later in the marriage. The few longitudinal studies that have followed couples from the middle to the later years within marriage, do not provide conclusive evidence and therefore fail to provide consistent support for an upturn in marital happiness in later life, as the U-curve theory suggests (VanLaningham et al. 2001, 1316). In fact, VanLaningham et al. note that marital happiness and marital duration is slightly curvilinear with the steepest declines in marital happiness occur during the earliest and latest years of marriage, and renounces that child rearing agitates harmony. Their recent study provides evidence that

the U-shaped pattern of marital happiness over the life course is a result of cross-sectional research as has not been proven typical in U.S. marriages (VanLaningham et al. 2001,1313).

If the curvilinear hypothesis with respect to marital quality and stage of life cycle is accurate, then one could expect a positive relationship between length of marriage and marital satisfaction. However in Lee's research on the relationship between these two factors, it was found that the length of marriage is not significantly related to marital satisfaction for either sex. On the other hand, having children at home is negatively related to marital satisfaction for both men and women (Lee 1988, 778).

### **Summary**

This chapter has presented a review of the literature and research on theological matters pertaining to the marriage relationship, as well as the historical developments on the empirical research of marital adjustment/satisfaction, family cohesion/adaptability, and the family life cycles. The chapter began with a biblical overview of both the Old and New Testament teachings on marriage, divorce, and the effects of sin upon the marriage union. The biblical mandate for the marriage union displays divine ordination and origination, exclusivity, permanence, and procreation where God chooses to bless accordingly. It was highlighted that nowhere in Scripture does God refer to the marriage union being dissolved due to unhappiness or lack of satisfaction, rather that we are to esteem one another as more important than ourselves and seek to satisfy the needs of one another.

The second section of this chapter was the most extensive, dealing with the overall subject of marital satisfaction. Defining how marital satisfaction can be

understood in today's culture is a tedious task. Furthermore there are a plethora of descriptors interchangeably used in precedent literature. There are concepts of happiness, adjustment, general satisfaction, and areas of cohesion and adaptability.

Marital adjustment/satisfaction may also be defined by the instrument used in conducting research. This chapter outlines two of the most widely used instruments for researching marital adjustment: the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale and The Dyadic Adjustment Scale. In current literature, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale is more often utilized.

Another way to define marital satisfaction is through perceived happiness. Some research shows that couples may be satisfied and not necessarily happy, and *visa-versa*. Researchers have categorized happiness as either institutional happiness or as companion happiness. In the former, spouses are highly committed to the institution of marriage itself and would never think of dissolving it, where in the later, persons are more concentrated on the spouse as a compatible life mate. There was also a short look at the issue of life happiness in general and how one's understanding of this concept may influence his/her marriage relationship.

The next sub-section briefly identified cultural trends in the area of marriage and divorce in the United States. While the 1990s saw eight straight years of decline in divorce rates, this rate remains hovering around 50% and has been since the mid-1980s. Trends include people waiting longer to get married and waiting longer to have children. The rate of divorce includes second, third and subsequent marriages. Some mention of how *period effects* and *childrearing* influence the marital relationship was given. Researchers must identify independent variables not always surveyed in the study such as

the effect the period or time in which the study was assessed and other influences such as children present in the home and the transitions this indicates.

Following this was a historical review of the related literature in the area of marital satisfaction research. This section was broken into four categories: early century, mid-century, the 1970s, and the late century research. A category for the 1970s was given special notation as this decade saw the greatest rise in percentage of research in this field. In it, field theorists such as Spanier and Cole, Levinger, Hicks and Platt, and Olson made some of their greatest contributions to the body of research. Much of what was discovered in the 1970s is still quite relevantly being built upon. Finally, a few long-term marriage studies were identified and implications regarding their findings were discussed.

A section on theory development outlined both the field theory model by Kurt Lewin and the more widely known, social exchange theory by George Levinger were highlighted. While the field theory somewhat reduces the interpersonal relationship of marriage into a mathematical equation, it is useful for isolating correlates. However, in the social exchange theory model, Levinger posits a meaningful interaction of forces that both inwardly attract and outwardly pull an individual into meaningful interaction with another person. Much of what Levinger contributed to this field of understanding is still utilized in clinical fields today.

Lastly, a short discussion was included on the interrelated sub-systems within a marital relationship, these being the parent/child sub-system and the husband/wife sub-system. While there are some limitations to this type of research, for the scholar curious to how sub-systems within the family unit interact with one another, a small body of research has been conducted to guide him/her in this endeavor.

The third section of this chapter includes the body of literature pertaining to the theory development on cohesion. There is a vast amount of research conducted in this field, especially in the past 30 years. In order to bring clarity to this tremendous variety of research available, the section was sub-divided into sections giving clarity to early historical research, research in the area of group therapy, and research in the area social psychology.

The fourth section of this chapter includes a brief review of literature in the area of adaptability. While this study is not interested in adaptability or cohesion independent of one another, it was the intention of the author to give the reader a cursory understanding of each correlate as distinct variables to have a greater understanding of how the two interact within the Circumplex Model.

The following section begins the blending of both cohesion and adaptability in the multi-variant scale, The Circumplex Model. This model identifies 16 family types according to a grid in which adaptability and cohesion are set on the x and y axis points. In a 20-question survey, known as FACES III, the instrument plots couples into one of the 16 possible family types. It has been most understood and accepted that those who fall within the inner four domains, have the best predictable marital satisfaction scores. However, some research redeems all aspects of the Circumplex Model, noting that what is most important is that both partners are content with where they are in the extremes.

Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of literature written in the area of family life cycle. There are a variety of definitions for the distinct family life cycles, where to plot the transition from one to the next, and whether to count the age of the oldest child or the youngest, or whether to include spacing between children as an issue

or not. For the purposes of this literature review, however, was to give the background research to the conflicting research on the curvilinear shaped satisfaction theory. While most cross-sectional research confirms the U-shaped theory of marital happiness starting high, dipping in the mid-years and then regaining happiness or satisfaction in later life, recent longitudinal studies disprove this theory completely. In fact, there is no body of longitudinal research on marital quality that shows that married persons experience an upward momentum of satisfaction later in life.

Some of the discrepancies may be that those who are unhappy in marriage dissolve their union before reaching those years, or that period effects have altered a couple's definition of satisfaction over a 20 to 30 year period. Certainly more research is needed in this field in order to fully understand the interworkings of the long-term marriage over many decades, childrearing, and other changes. This chapter served as a rationale for this study that sought to discover possible relationships between marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability during specific life cycles of family life.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

It has long been surmised that the foundation of a strong society resides in healthy families. Sociologists suggest that stable families provide the essential ingredients for personal well being and relational happiness. Indeed, studies have shown that those who never marry are more likely to experience increased health risks and shorter life spans (Sefton 1985). Families contribute to society by investing in the next generation. This is done through education moral instruction, character development, and spiritual formation. God ordained the family to become the first human institution and consecrated it as set apart from other organizations. Understanding what factors contribute to the development of marital happiness and family cohesion not only informs society as a whole but also can play a significant factor in Christian education as well (Dobson 2004).

Marital satisfaction is a multi-dimensional construct since so many variable have been determined to influence its development. This helps explain why so few researchers have been able to agree on what to label this sociological phenomena. Descriptors such as marital happiness, marital stability, dyadic adjustment, and marital satisfaction have been used in the field during the past seven decades of investigation. And while research on the topic abounds, a small array of findings have been brought forward with any degree of conclusive evidence.

Chief among factors that influence marital satisfaction is the presence of children in the home. Whether as newborns or adolescents, children impact the home in meaningful ways. They contribute to monumental happiness during the early stages of family life while presenting considerable apprehension to parents during their adolescent years (Feldman and Feldman 1975; Spanier et al. 1975; Steinberg and Silverberg 1987). Some children sail through the years between preschool and young adulthood with seemingly little disequilibrium to the home while others create enough stress and strain so as to undermine the marriage relationship altogether. And while it would be nice to claim Christian families are immune from such stress and strain because of our biblical foundation, the fact is that many Christian families undergo the same tensions and pressures as their secular neighbors.

### **Research Question Synopsis**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship, if any, between factors that effect the development of marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability among evangelical Christian married parents across three family life cycles in a select Southern Californian sample, Rock Harbor Church of Costa Mesa, California. In addition, the purpose of this study is to further the understanding of Christian marriage and family dynamics while raising children in ways that will allow for Christian educators and ministers to more effectively meet the changing needs in the diverse family structures present in Southern Californian culture.

Toward this end, a questionnaire was used to measure marital satisfaction and the independent variables that have been described in the chapter two of this dissertation as effecting marital satisfaction. The description of methodology will be divided into

three sections. The first will describe the design of the study, the second will describe the instrumentation used, and the third will describe the research procedures followed.

Through analyzing the marital satisfaction and level of family cohesion/adaptability among evangelical Christian couples in various stages of parenting, four research questions were explored:

1. What contributing factors characterize the greatest levels of perceived marital satisfaction among evangelical Christian parents?
2. What family types are identified utilizing the *Circumplex Model* for assessing family cohesion/adaptability within the sample of evangelical Christian parents?
3. What relationship, if any, is there between marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between the family life cycle and marital satisfaction, family cohesion/family adaptability, or both?

### **Research Design Overview**

This study was designed to analyze the relationship between the independent variable of overall marital satisfaction, and the independent variable, family cohesion/adaptability. This was a correlational study using a descriptive design research methodology. As such, correlational studies do not account for causation. Therefore this study did not determine if cohesion in families cause marital satisfaction. This study related only to the variables under consideration. It is reasonable to believe that other variables, which were not studied, may have also affected the results of the current study. Significant emotional or economic changes within the sample marriages prior to or during participation in this investigation may have also limited the findings of this study.

## **Population**

The population of this study was the congregation of Rock Harbor Church located in Costa Mesa, California. The church membership as of May 2006 was approximately 6500 individuals, with approximately 700 married family units. The sample was randomly chosen by inviting all interested married adult parents to participate in the marriage and family survey by completing the survey instrument that included the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, FACES III, and seven other demographic questions.

## **Sample**

Any married individuals with children who attended worship services on the weekends of December 16, 2006 through January 31, 2007 had the opportunity to participate in this study. In addition, any married individuals with children were able to participate in this study online on the Rock Harbor website at [www.rockharbor.org/family](http://www.rockharbor.org/family), following the December 16, 2006 weekend services. All surveys were completed by February 1, 2007. It was expected that the sample would consist of 400 returned surveys.

## **Delimitations**

Considering that this study was conducted to determine the relationship, if any, between marital satisfaction and family cohesion among evangelical Christian parents across stages of family life cycle, non-Christian, Catholic, and all churches not pursuing evangelical theological education were excluded from this study. This research did not take into account other possible contributing factors to marital satisfaction such as family of origin issues, commitment to monogamy, job stability, pre-marital cohabitation, or

issues regarding mental or physical health. The findings of this research were focused within the framework of marital satisfaction as it pertains to family cohesion/adaptability across stages of the family life cycle.

### **Research Method**

This research was a correlational study using a descriptive design research methodology. As such, correlational studies do not account for causation. Therefore this study did not determine if cohesion in families cause marital satisfaction. This study relates only to the variables under consideration. It is reasonable to believe that other variables which were not studied may also affect the results of the current study.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument was designed to be brief and easy to complete. Demographic information contained only essential information for the purposes of this study, the seven questions at the end of the survey were structured to input one number and then circle the letter Y or N for answers yes or no. These questions were combined with two additional research instruments. These two instruments were combined into a four-page survey, along with the additional questions, and was administered to each of the participants. In addition to the two instruments, a brief demographic questionnaire comprised of seven additional items was added to the beginning of the survey, and seven questions regarding to their experience at Rock Harbor Church were added to the end of the survey.

Keeping the time to complete the survey within ten minutes was deemed essential for the successful collection of data in a church setting. The format, layout, type size, and color of paper were carefully selected to maximize the return rate of the

surveys. An initial testing of the questionnaire indicated that the average time needed to complete the survey was six and a half minutes. The survey was available to all married parents attending Rock Harbor Church in both hard copy and web-based varieties.

### **Dyadic Adjustment Scale**

The first instrument consisted of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale designed by Spanier to measure marital satisfaction. Dyadic adjustment can be defined as a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of (1) troublesome dyadic differences; (2) interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety, (3) dyadic satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning (Spanier 1974, 17).

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), which is the most commonly used self-report measure of marital adjustment (Glenn 1990), has a total of 32 items. It is comprised of four subscales of adjustment: dyadic satisfaction (10 items), dyadic consensus (13 items), dyadic cohesion (5 items), and Affectional expressions (4 items). Using a comprehensive approach by drawing a pool of 300 items from 17 differing scales for the measurement of marital adjustment, Spanier began the development of the DAS. Soon, the duplicate items and items low on content validity were eliminated. Forty items remained after that examination. Due to low factor loadings (below .30), another 8 items were eliminated. The remaining 32 items comprise the current DAS instrument (Spanier 1976).

Embedded in the 32 items of the DAS are 10 statements which generate the Dyadic Satisfaction subscale. The majority of the items are answered by selecting from a 6-point Likert scale in gradations of agreement and frequency. The scales range from

the absolute polar opposites of “Always Agree” to “Always Disagree”; “All the Time” to “Never”; “Every Day” to “Never”; etc. One global assessment of happiness gives seven choices from “Extremely Unhappy” to “Perfect” with the mid-range descriptor being “Happy.” Spanier notes that this middle descriptor most represents the degree of happiness in the average relationship (Spanier 1976).

The scale was scored according to the instructions provided in Spanier’s 1976 article. The scale has a theoretical range of 0-151. A high level of marital satisfaction is determined by a score that is above the mean for the sample being used. For example, Spanier’s test sample of 624 individuals produced a mean Dyadic Adjustment Scale score of 114.8 for his married respondents. In comparison, the mean Dyadic Adjustment Scale for this study was 119.17 (Spanier 1976, 20).

**Reliability.** The scales and subscales are highly reliable. Chronbach’s alpha = .96 for the global measure and range from .73 to .94 for the various subscales (Sabbatelli, 1988, 897). Reliability and validity studies are consistently positive. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale has been found to be highly reliable over time (Carey 1993), and “is reputed to have good construct validity by virtue of being highly related to other measures of marital quality” (Hunsley et al. 1995, 232). A global score based on the total of the four subscales is commonly used in research and is recommended by Spanier; however, a number of recent investigations have sought to determine whether or not a shorter version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale could be equally reliable.

A single-item version (Clark et al. 1988), a 6-item version (Hansen 1987), and a 7-item version (Hansen 1985; Martin 1985) have all been used by researchers as viable substitutes for the full version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale although they have been

deemed most beneficial when classifying respondents into groups of high and low marital satisfaction. Since more robust and detailed examination is possible using a global score (interval data) as opposed to a high/low grouping (ordinal data), this investigation will employ the 32-item measure.

### **Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III**

The second instrument used was the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III (FACES III). This instrument was developed by Olson and his associates to empirically measure the dynamic nature of marital and family functioning. Three dimensions of marital functioning – cohesion, adaptability, and communication are viewed in the literature as central to the creation of a healthy functioning family unit. Cohesion and adaptability are particularly important because they serve as foundational to the underlying nature of the system (Eppy 1985, 88). FACES III measures two dimensions: (1) cohesion—a measure of emotional bonding vs. individual autonomy; and (2) adaptability—a measure of flexibility in adjusting power relationships during stressful situations (Olson, Russell and Sprenkle 1979, 20-27). Graphically, the Circumplex Model illustrates a typology between cohesion and adaptability positioned at right angles to each other. The intersection of each dimension forms 16 possible family subtypes (see Figure 1, p. 59).

The concentric shapes from which the Circumplex Model derives its name reflect three principal categories of family subtypes. The inner most category represents balanced and healthy functioning, depicted by the four subtypes which have moderate

scores. Extreme scores in either dimension are seen as unhealthy and counterproductive to healthy family functioning (Taylor 1998, 8).

Communication, the third dimension (cohesion and adaptability are the other two) in Olson's Circumplex Model is a facilitating dimension and is not graphically illustrated in the model itself (Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle 1983). Communication facilitates movement toward a balanced level of cohesion and adaptability, thereby maintaining the system at that particular level (Eppy 1985, 89). Ineffectual communication patterns restrict or prevent the ability of an individual to move toward a balanced perspective (Olson et al. 1983).

The original FACES scale was developed by Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell after a review of over fifty concepts found in the literature related to the constructs of cohesion, adaptability and communication. It was their intention to integrate the diverse theoretical and therapeutic models which were prevalent in describing families (Olson 1983, 16). Since its inception, it has undergone several revisions. The latest version, FACES III, is a 20-item scale developed from items used in a national survey conducted at the Family Social Science Center of the University of Minnesota by Olson et al. The resulting scales were developed from a study of over one thousand "normal" families (Crouch 1993, 50).

**Reliability.** Olson and associates used Chronbach Alpha to evaluate the reliability coefficients of the cohesion and adaptability scales. It was computed for each split sample as well as the total sample. Reliability for the scale of cohesion was .77, adaptability was .62, and the total scale was evaluated at .68.

According to Olson, the internal consistency reliability is acceptable for both cohesion and adaptability scales and was replicated across the two independent samples (Crouch 1993, 53). Olson explains the relatively low reliabilities as resulting from “. . . the large number of concepts used to adequately represent the complexity and richness of the adaptability dimension” (Olson 1976, 22).

### **Demographics**

In addition to The Dyadic Adjustment Scale and The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III, seven demographic variables were also measured. The variables include income level, highest educational degree earned, age, gender, number of years married to their current spouse, number of children living at home, and the stage of family life cycle that the respondent is currently experiencing.

**Income.** Whenever the demographic item of income is added to a questionnaire, there is always the risk that a respondent will not respond honestly due to a desire to maintain some degree of confidentiality. Since Glick and Norton indicated a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and income level, its inclusion in this survey warrants the higher risk of non-responses (Glick and Norton 1971). The median income level of Orange County residents in 2006 is \$72,000 (*Orange County Register* May 28, 2006, p. 2). Seven income levels were established at \$15,000 intervals beginning at \$30,000.

**Education.** Level of education was determined by asking the respondents for their highest educational degree earned: high school, college, and graduate school.

**Age.** Although research has not found a correlation between age and marital satisfaction (Glenn and Weaver 1978), it seemed prudent to investigate this variable since the information is readily available for comparative purposes with other research findings.

**Gender.** Early research discovered that men were slightly more satisfied in their marriages than were women (Ryne 1981). However, the majority of more recent research that compares gender to initial marital satisfaction has discovered that wives experience a higher level of marital satisfaction than do husbands (Shumm et al. 1998). Shapiro et al. reported in their study that average initial marital satisfaction was significantly higher for wives who became mothers than for wives who remained childless. In addition, marital satisfaction was significantly higher for wives who became mothers than for husbands who became fathers and marital satisfaction was significantly higher for wives who remained childless than for husbands who remained childless (Shapiro et al. 2000, 62).

**Number of years married to current spouse.** It has been assumed that the number of years a person is married to his or her current spouse is a reflection, to a limited degree, of the level of marital satisfaction since it is presumed that an individual who is consistently unhappy in marriage will choose to sever the relationship eventually. Disillusionment of a marriage is generally viewed as a measure of marital discontent. Glass and Wright examined the effects of length of marriage on marital satisfaction and concluded that marital satisfaction was lower for those who had been married twelve years or more (Glass and Wright 1977). Lee, however, did not find such a relationship in

his study (Lee 1988). Respondents were asked to identify the numbers of the years they had been married to their current spouses.

**Number of children at home.** Miller discovered that the number and spacing of the children represented in a family affected the level of satisfaction in the marriage. Studies have found conflicting evidence regarding levels of marital satisfaction being correlated to the number of children present in the home (Miller 1976). Rankin discovered that couples who rated higher on marital satisfaction were those who were without children (Rankin 1981). Nyland compared marital satisfaction among couples who were infertile and compared these results to couples with children. Based on his findings, he concluded that the presence of children in the home had a negative effect on marital satisfaction (Nyland 1999).

**Stage of family life cycle.** Family life cycle is a measure based on the age of the couple's oldest child (Cron 1994). There are three family life cycle stages: early – oldest child is between birth and age six; middle – oldest child is between age 7 to 14; later – oldest child is between the ages 15 and 22. Respondents were asked to identify the age of their oldest child in order to be classified by their family life cycle stage.

### **Research Procedures**

Permission to use the research instruments during all weekend services at Rock Harbor Church was received from the Lead Pastor and the Director of Communications prior to their distribution. Upon receiving permission, a four-page document containing the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, FACES III, seven demographic questions, and seven Rock Harbor Church related questions, was distributed to all married parents with at least one

child under the age of 25 living at home who attend each of the seven weekend services beginning on December 16, 2006. The respondents were asked to complete the document and place it in one of the available baskets at the conclusion of the service or return it in one of the prepaid business return envelopes that were provided. In addition, an email invitation was extended for those individuals who qualified, based on the delimitations, to go online at [www.rockharborchurch.org/family](http://www.rockharborchurch.org/family) where a copy of the survey was made available through a link on the home page.

A reminder notice was made each week in the bulletin and in an electronic bulletin for a period of six weeks. A reminder email notice went out to families and for those individuals who misplaced the survey, additional copies were made available at the Family Ministries Kiosk after each of the services.

Surveys were collected by the researcher from the available bins or through an online link, printed (if necessary), and kept in a binder to be analyzed. Each survey was numbered in the top right corner. Strict confidentiality of all participants was honored. Names did not appear anywhere on the hard copy survey or the on-line survey.

A total of 371 surveys were collected, and 15 surveys were deemed unusable for one or more reasons. Reasons included the following: incomplete surveys, illegible surveys, persons completing the survey either not being married or not having children, and survey information marked in more than one box. Once the 356 viable surveys were scored according to the appropriate instructions, data was placed into an MS Excel spreadsheet. This data was statistically analyzed using the SSPS statistical program and utilized the following statistical analysis: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, One way Analysis of variance (ANOVA), and chi square depending on the research question that

is being examined. In addition, the data was processed to determine significance. Once this information was analyzed and the research questions answered, the results were displayed in appropriate data tables and their meaning explained and discussed in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

### **Conclusion**

Marital satisfaction has been the subject of numerous research investigations for decades across North America and Europe. Researchers have sought to determine what factors contribute toward the development of a satisfying and fulfilling marriage. Flowing out of this plethora of studies is a broad paradigm for understanding marital functioning. Family cohesion, adaptability, and communication have been found to play a role in healthy functioning. Determining whether or not marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability are impacted, and to what degree, by the presence of children in the home at various stages of the family life cycle has yet to be definitively determined with any degree of certainty.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship, if any, between factors that effect the development of marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability among evangelical Christian married parents across three family life cycles in a select Southern Californian sample, Rock Harbor Church of Costa Mesa, California. In addition, the purpose of this study is to further the understanding of Christian marriage and family dynamics while raising children in ways that will allow for Christian educators and ministers to more effectively meet the changing needs in the diverse family structures present in Southern Californian culture.

#### **Compilation Protocol**

This study used a descriptive correlational design. That is, the interrelationships were examined between the variables without manipulation by the researcher. The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which variables such as marital satisfaction and family cohesion impact each other across the three identified family life cycles. As such, no causality can be inferred from the data obtained.

The population of this study was the congregation of Rock Harbor Church located in Costa Mesa, California. The church membership as of May 2006 was approximately 6500 individuals, with approximately 700 married family units. The

sample was randomly drawn by inviting all interested married adult parents to participate by completing the survey instruments (Dyadic Adjustment Scale, FACES III, seven demographic questions, and seven ministry related questions). Any married individuals with children who attended worship services on the weekends of December 16, 2006 through January 31, 2007 had the opportunity to participate. In addition, any married individuals with children were able to participate in this study online on the Rock Harbor website at [www.rockharbor.org/family](http://www.rockharbor.org/family), following the December 16, 2006 weekend services. All surveys were completed by February 1, 2007. It was expected that the sample would consist of 400 returned surveys.

### **Findings and Displays**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings gleaned from the statistical analysis of the population studied and discuss the results of those findings. Once the data was collected it was processed using SSPS statistical analysis and displayed in frequency distribution tables to summarize the following data. The first table displays the demographic data: gender, number of years married to their current spouse, number of children currently living in the home, stage of family life cycle, family income level, highest educational degree earned, and the age of respondent. This frequency distribution table shows the demographic label, raw data frequency, and percent frequency.

### **Demographics**

Table 1 includes the major demographic statistics for the sample of this study. All 356 respondents reported their gender. The results as indicated in Table 1 showed

that there were 111 male respondents and 245 female respondents. There were five categories for classifying duration of time the respondent was married to his or her current spouse. These categories ranged from one to four years to over 20 years.

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=356)

Characteristic	Category	n	%	
Gender				
	Male	111	31	
	Female	245	69	
Years Married to Current Spouse				
	1-4	60	16.85	
	5-9	126	35.39	
	10-14	80	22.47	
	15-19	46	12.92	
	Over 20	44	12.36	
Dependent Children				
	1	97	27.32	
	2	145	40.84	
	3	83	23.38	
	4	4	1.12	
	5	21	5.91	
	6	1	0.02	
	7	4	1.12	
	No response	1	0.02	
Age of Oldest Child Living at Home				
		Range		
	Lowest	1		
	Highest	27		
	Mean	7.9		
Family Life Cycle	Oldest child			
	1	Age 6	162	45.50
	2	Age 14	135	37.92
	3	Age 25	59	16.57

Table 1— Continued.  
Demographic Characteristics  
of Respondents (N=356)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
<b>Family Income</b>			
1	< \$30,000	9	2.54
2	\$30,000-44,999	31	8.7
3	\$45,000-59,999	19	5.37
4	\$60,000-74,999	46	12.99
5	\$75,000-89,999	52	14.69
6	\$90,000-114,999	88	24.86
7	>\$115,000	107	30.23
	No response	2	.56
<b>Education Level</b>			
1	High school	86	24.15
2	College	188	52.8
3	Graduate	68	19.1
4	Other	14	3.93
<b>Age Level</b>			
1	20-29 years	71	20.05
2	30-39 years	170	48.02
3	40-49 years	88	24.85
4	50-59 years	18	5.08
5	60+ years	7	1.97

Respondents were asked to fill in the age of their oldest child living at home. The age of that child was rounded up to the nearest age for the use of data calculation if a half-year was stated. This age was used to determine which of the three current family life cycles the family represented. Life cycle theory for this study was determined according to precedent literature.

The early family life cycle is defined as one who is “married, living with spouse, has one or more children in infancy through age six (normally in the first grade).

The average early family life cycle spans six years” (Cron 1994, 9). The middle family life cycle is defined as one who is “married living with spouse, has one or more children, oldest child between age seven (second grade) and age fourteen (ninth grade). The average middle family life cycle spans eight years” (Cron 1994, 9). The late family life cycle is defined as one who is “married living with spouse, has one or more children, oldest child between age 15 (tenth grade) and 21-25 (past their senior year in college). The average late family life cycle spans six/seven years (Cron 1994, 10).

Respondents were asked to document their family combined income level. Two respondents withheld their responses for this question, and thus a total number of respondents for this question was 354. The salary ranges began at <\$30,000 and ended at >\$115,000. There were a total of seven categories that were separated by \$15,000 increments.

Asking respondents to document their highest degree held assessed the educational level for this study. The choices included high school diploma, college degree, graduate degree, and other. If the other category was selected, respondents were asked to specify what other education they had. Many respondents indicated that they had taken some college or post-college courses. In this event, the previous category was assigned for that respondent. In other words, if a candidate had completed three college courses, he or she was still classified as only holding a high school diploma. There were 14 respondents whose post high school education served specialized education that was not categorized as a college degree but was similar for their particular professional field.

Lastly, respondents were asked to categorize their age according to ten-year spans beginning with 20-29 years and ending with 60+ years. Two respondents did not

respond to this question. Almost half (48%) of the respondents were between the ages of 30-39. There were no surveyed individuals who were younger than 20 years of age. Only seven respondents were 60 years of age or older.

### **Research Question Findings**

The findings of the research were organized around the particular research questions that framed the basis of this investigation. As such, each research question was presented and a detailed examination of the data that corresponded to each question were presented. All ANOVA statistical tests and the two-tailed t-tests were measured at the .05 alpha level of significance, while all Correlational statistical tests were measured at the .30 (or -.30) and higher according to Table 6. The Chi Square tests produce a critical value score which is converted by the SPSS statistical package into a value score. The significance is then calculated from this score at a significance level of .05 or lower.

Through analyzing the marital satisfaction and level of family cohesion among evangelical Christian couples in various stages of parenting, four research questions were explored:

**Research question no. 1. What contributing factors characterize the greatest levels of perceived marital satisfaction among evangelical Christian parents?** A number of tests using statistical analysis took place on the data to determine what factors significantly contribute to the development of marital satisfaction. One of these tests included an Analysis of Variance. A one-factor Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is used to compare mean differences from two or more treatments. ANOVA is effective for analyzing effects of nominal or ordinal independent variables (gender, income, education, family system type) on a continuous dependent variable (marital

satisfaction or family life cycle). It can also measure effects from more than two independent variables simultaneously and their interaction effects. An ANOVA test determines the significance of the effects by calculating the variance in the dependent variable that is due to the different factors or pure chance.

An Analysis of Variance was conducted between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and the type of family system present to determine significance. The level of significance was a .002 and thus was determined that there was a significant statistical difference between marital satisfaction and family type system in accordance with the Circumplex Model (see Table 2).

Table 2  
ANOVA Summary for Mean Group Dyadic Adjustment Scale and Family System Type

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2325.610	2	1162.805	6.557	.002
Within Groups	62601.612	354	177.342		
Total	64927.222	356			

A Tukey post hoc test is used to determine where *specifically* the significance found in the initial analysis can be attributed. A post hoc test was conducted to determine which family system type(s) had a statistically significant difference. The statistical difference was between family system type 1 (balanced) and family system 2 (mid-range) as well as between family system type 1 (balanced) and family system type 3 (extreme). The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3  
Tukey Post Hoc of Mean Difference and Significance Between Family System Types

(A) FmSysTp	(B) FmSysTp	Mean Difference (A-B)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-4.458(*)	1.520	.010	-8.04	-.88
	3	-6.603(*)	2.188	.008	-11.75	-1.45
2	1	4.458(*)	1.520	.010	.88	8.04
	3	-2.144	2.183	.588	-7.28	2.99
3	1	6.603(*)	2.188	.008	1.45	11.75
	2	2.144	2.183	.588	-2.99	7.28

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

A one-factor Analysis of Variance between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and the family income level was conducted to determine significance. There was no significant difference found, but a descriptive analysis was conducted in order to determine mean and standard deviation between the marital satisfaction scores and family income level. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4  
Descriptive Analysis of Marital Satisfaction and Family Income Level

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min. MS Score	Max. MS Score
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	9	112.00	9.682	104.56	119.44	103	132
2	31	118.35	10.343	114.56	122.15	97	134
3	19	118.95	10.952	113.67	124.23	100	139
4	46	120.17	14.518	115.86	124.49	79	143
5	52	118.12	11.119	115.02	121.21	86	139
6	88	117.76	16.753	114.21	121.31	57	150
7	107	121.41	12.552	119.01	123.82	62	144
<i>Total</i>	<i>352</i>	<i>119.21</i>	<i>13.538</i>	<i>117.79</i>	<i>120.63</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>150</i>

A one-factor Analysis of Variance between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and level of educational degree earned was conducted to determine significance. There was no significant difference found between the two variables, but a descriptive analysis was conducted in order to determine mean and standard deviation between the marital satisfaction scores and four different types of educational levels described. The results are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5  
Descriptive Analysis of Marital Satisfaction and Education

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min. MS Score	Max. MS Score
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	86	120.76	11.520	118.29	123.23	80	143
2	188	118.77	13.966	116.76	120.78	57	141
3	68	118.28	14.037	114.88	121.68	62	144
4	14	119.07	16.800	109.37	128.77	89	150
Total	356	119.17	13.524	117.76	120.58	57	150

A correlation coefficient measures the direction and degree of relationship between two variables. The range of correlation coefficient is between -1 and +1. A zero correlation means that no relationship exists. A negative correlation indicates that when one variable increases in value, the other decreases. A correlation cannot be interpreted as a cause-effect relationship between the two variables; it measures only the strength and the direction of the relationship between the two variables, but does not suggest which causes which (Gall et al. 1996, 459).

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation test between the marital satisfaction score of the respondent and their age was conducted to determine significance. The following guidelines will be used to assess the strength of the correlations:

Table 6  
Rules of Thumb of Interpreting Correlation Coefficients

.90 to 1.00 (-.90 to -1.00)	Very high positive (negative) correlation
.70 to .90 (-.70 to - .90)	High positive (negative) correlation
.50 to .70 (-.50 to - .70)	Moderate positive (negative) correlation
.30 to .50 (-.30 to - .50)	Low positive (negative) correlation
.00 to .30 (-.00 to - .30)	Little, if any correlation

(Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs, 1982, 110)

There was no significant difference found between these two variables. The significance between marital satisfaction and age was scored at .068. Using the graph supplied in Table 6 it is determined that there is little if any correlation between age and marital satisfaction.

Borg and Gall summarize the purpose of using a t-test. This distribution allows the researcher to test the difference between the mean scores for the two groups. The t-test is effective when the distribution of scores is assumed to have normal distribution and the variances of the two samples are assumed to be equal. (Borg and Gall 1983, 546). In this study, a t-test was used to determine the significance between the two independent means of the marital satisfaction scores of the male and female respondents.

There were 111 male respondents and 245 female respondents who participated in this study. The t-test showed that there was absolutely no statistical

difference in marital satisfaction between the two groups. The mean was only .52 higher for men. See Table 7 for details.

Table 7  
Marital Satisfaction Between Genders

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MS	1	111	119.52	12.539	1.190
	2	245	119.00	13.969	.892

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation test between the marital satisfaction score of the respondent and the number of years married to their current spouse was conducted. The correlation test failed to produce significance with a score of only .087 therefore an ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a significance between the variables utilizing a different statistical analysis. The ANOVA determined that there was a significant difference, with a significance of .017. The results are detailed in Table 8. In addition, the mean scores range from 120.93 to 124.55 with a two identical low means of 117.33 for marriage categories 2 (5-9 years) and 3 (10-14 years) as displayed in Table 9.

Table 8  
Marital Satisfaction and Years Married to Current Spouse

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2182.225	4	545.556	3.052	.017*
Within Groups	62744.997	352	178.761		
Total	64927.222	356			

\*Significance measured at the .05 level.

Table 9  
ANOVA Means and Standard Deviations for Marital Satisfaction and Years Married

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min. MS Score	Max. MS Score
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	60	120.93	10.224	118.29	123.57	100	142
2	123	117.33	14.846	114.68	119.98	62	144
3	83	117.33	14.826	114.09	120.56	57	150
4	46	119.93	14.061	115.76	124.11	79	139
5	44	124.55	8.022	122.11	126.98	110	140
Total	356	119.17	13.524	117.76	120.58	57	150

Table 10  
Tukey Post Hoc Analysis Between Marital Satisfaction and Years Married to Spouse

(A) YrMS	(B) YrMS	Mean Difference (A-B)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	3.600	2.105	.429	-2.17	9.37
	3	3.608	2.266	.503	-2.60	9.82
	4	.999	2.620	.996	-6.19	8.18
	5	-3.612	2.654	.653	-10.89	3.66
2	1	-3.600	2.105	.429	-9.37	2.17
	3	.008	1.899	1.000	-5.20	5.22
	4	-2.601	2.311	.793	-8.94	3.73
	5	-7.212(*)	2.349	.019	-13.65	-.77
3	1	-3.608	2.266	.503	-9.82	2.60
	2	-.008	1.899	1.000	-5.22	5.20
	4	-2.609	2.458	.826	-9.35	4.13
	5	-7.220(*)	2.493	.033	-14.06	-.38
4	1	-.999	2.620	.996	-8.18	6.19
	2	2.601	2.311	.793	-3.73	8.94
	3	2.609	2.458	.826	-4.13	9.35
	5	-4.611	2.819	.476	-12.34	3.12
5	1	3.612	2.654	.653	-3.66	10.89
	2	7.212(*)	2.349	.019	.77	13.65
	3	7.220(*)	2.493	.033	.38	14.06
	4	4.611	2.819	.476	-3.12	12.34

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

A Tukey post hoc test was conducted to determine which category/categories of years married to current spouse had a statistically significant difference. The statistical difference was between the fifth category of years married to current spouse (over 20 years) and the second category (5-9 years) as well as between the fifth category of years married to current spouse (over 20 years) and the third category (10-14 years). The results are displayed in Table 10.

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation test between the marital satisfaction score of the respondent and the number of children present in the home was conducted. There was no significance determined and therefore an ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a significance between the variables utilizing a different statistical analysis. The ANOVA determined that there was no significant difference, with a significance of .219.

Table 11  
Marital Satisfaction and Number of Children Present in the Home

Children	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min. MS Score	Max. MS Score
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	97	120.11	11.724	117.75	122.48	79	142
2	145	117.28	15.810	114.69	119.88	57	150
3	83	121.54	10.753	119.19	123.89	80	140
4	4	115.50	8.062	102.67	128.33	106	124
5	22	119.05	14.271	112.72	125.37	86	139
6	1	137.00	*	*	*	137	137
7	4	115.00	9.522	99.85	130.15	109	129
Total	356	119.17	13.524	117.76	120.58	57	150

\*only one respondent in this category

The marital satisfaction mean was 119.17 with means ranging from 115 to 121.54. The lowest mean (115) represented the families with seven children in the home and the highest mean (121.54) represented the families with three children in the home. The results are detailed in Table 11.

**Research question no. 2. What family types are identified within the Circumplex Model for assessing family cohesion/adaptability within the sample of evangelical Christian parents?** A Chi Square test is a nonparametric test of significance for independence appropriate when the data are in the form of frequency counts occurring in two or more mutually exclusive categories. The Chi Square test considers the number of observations found in each category and compares this with the number of observations one would expect if there was no relationship between the tests and differences between the proportions in each category were only the result of chance (Gray 1981, 325).

A Chi Square for independence was conducted comparing family system type (balanced, mid-range, and extreme) with level of family income. Data was categorized in a 3-by-7 matrix. The computed  $\chi_2 = 14.00$  and was compared to the critical value score (21.02) taken from a chi square table with four degrees of freedom. The significance was determined at .301; therefore, no statistical difference was found.

A Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family system type (balanced, mid-range, and extreme) with highest educational degree earned. Data was categorized in a 3-by-4 matrix. The computed  $\chi_2 = 4.192$  was compared to the value score (12.59) taken from a chi square table with six degrees of freedom. The significance was determined at .651; therefore, no statistical difference was found.

A Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family system type (balanced, mid-range, and extreme) with the age category of the respondents. Data was categorized in a 3-by-5 matrix. The computed  $\chi^2 = 9.092$  was compared to the value score (15.507) taken from a chi square table with eight degrees of freedom. The significance was determined at .335; therefore, no statistical difference was found.

A Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family system type (balanced, mid-range, and extreme) with gender. Data was categorized in a 3-by-2 matrix. The computed  $\chi^2 = 3.121$  was compared to the value score (5.99) taken from a chi square table with two degrees of freedom. The significance was determined at .210; therefore, no statistical difference was found.

A Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family system type (balanced, mid-range, and extreme) with number of years married to one's current spouse. Data was categorized in a 3-by-5 matrix. There was a statistical significance found in the data as displayed in Table 12.

Table 12  
Analysis of Family System Type and Years Married to Current Spouse

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.324(a)	8	.009
Likelihood Ratio	20.838	8	.008
N of Valid Cases	356		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.06.

The computed  $\chi^2$  was compared to the value score (20.324) taken from a chi square table with eight degrees of freedom. The significance was determined at .009; therefore, a significant statistical difference was found.

Because there was a significant difference found, a cross-tabulation was conducted to determine which family system type grouping is statistically more significant. The results determined that families married in the third category (10-14 years) were operating in a *more* balanced family type system than would be expected through chance, while those married in the fifth category (over 20 years) were operating in a *less* balanced family type system than would be expected through chance. The results are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13  
Cross-Tabulation of Family System Type and Years Married to Current Spouse

			Years Married to Spouse					Total
			1	2	3	4	5	
Family System Type	bal	Count	21	58	27	23	23	152
		<i>Expected Count</i>	25.6	52.5	35.4	19.6	18.8	152.0
	ext	Count	14	15	9	2	9	49
		<i>Expected Count</i>	8.3	16.9	11.4	6.3	6.1	49.0
	mid	Count	25	50	47	21	12	155
		<i>Expected Count</i>	26.1	53.6	36.1	20.0	19.2	155.0
Total	Count		60	123	83	46	44	356
	<i>Expected Count</i>		60.0	123.0	83.0	46.0	44.0	356.0

An Analysis of Variance was conducted comparing family system type with the number of dependent children living at home. The family system types, balanced, mid-range, and extreme were given numeric equivalents: balanced= 1, mid-range = 2, and extreme= 3 to run ANOVA data. Data was then computed and the significance was determined at .204 and therefore no statistical difference was found. The distribution ranged from 1.98 to 2.32 as seen in Table 14.

Table 14  
Analysis of Family System Type and Dependent Children Living at Home

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min. # of Children	Max. # of Children
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	152	2.23	1.204	2.04	2.42	1	7
2	155	2.32	1.156	2.14	2.51	1	7
3	49	1.98	1.127	1.66	2.30	1	5
Total	356	2.24	1.175	2.11	2.36	1	7

A Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family system type (balanced, mid-range, and extreme) with stage of family life cycle (nursery/preschool= FLC 1, elementary= FLC 2, and junior high/senior high/college= FLC 3). Data was categorized in a three-by-three matrix. The computed  $\chi^2 = 7.816$  was compared to the value score (12.59) taken from a chi square table with six degrees of freedom. The significance was determined at .252; therefore, no statistical difference was found.

**Research question no. 3. What relationship, if any, is there between marital satisfaction and family cohesion and family adaptability?** A Pearson Product

Moment Correlation test was conducted between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and family cohesion score. There was a significant difference found. The mean score for marital satisfaction was 119.17 and the mean score for family cohesion was 42.54 from 356 respondents as seen in Tables 15 and 16.

Table 15  
Descriptive Statistics Between Marital Satisfaction and Family Cohesion

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Marital Satisfaction	119.17	13.524	356
Cohesion	42.54	4.733	356

Table 16  
Correlations Between Marital Satisfaction and Family Cohesion

		MS	Coh
MS	Pearson Correlation	1	.360(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	356	356
Coh	Pearson Correlation	.360(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	356	356

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data determined a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and family cohesion with a positive correlation score of .360. Significance is determined at the .01 level. Both marital satisfaction and cohesion rise in a correlational pattern as displayed in the Scattergram provided in Table 17. While this data cannot assume that one of the variables causes the other to rise, this discovery does demonstrate that where

families in this study who scored higher on marital satisfaction would also score higher in their family cohesion score and visa versa.

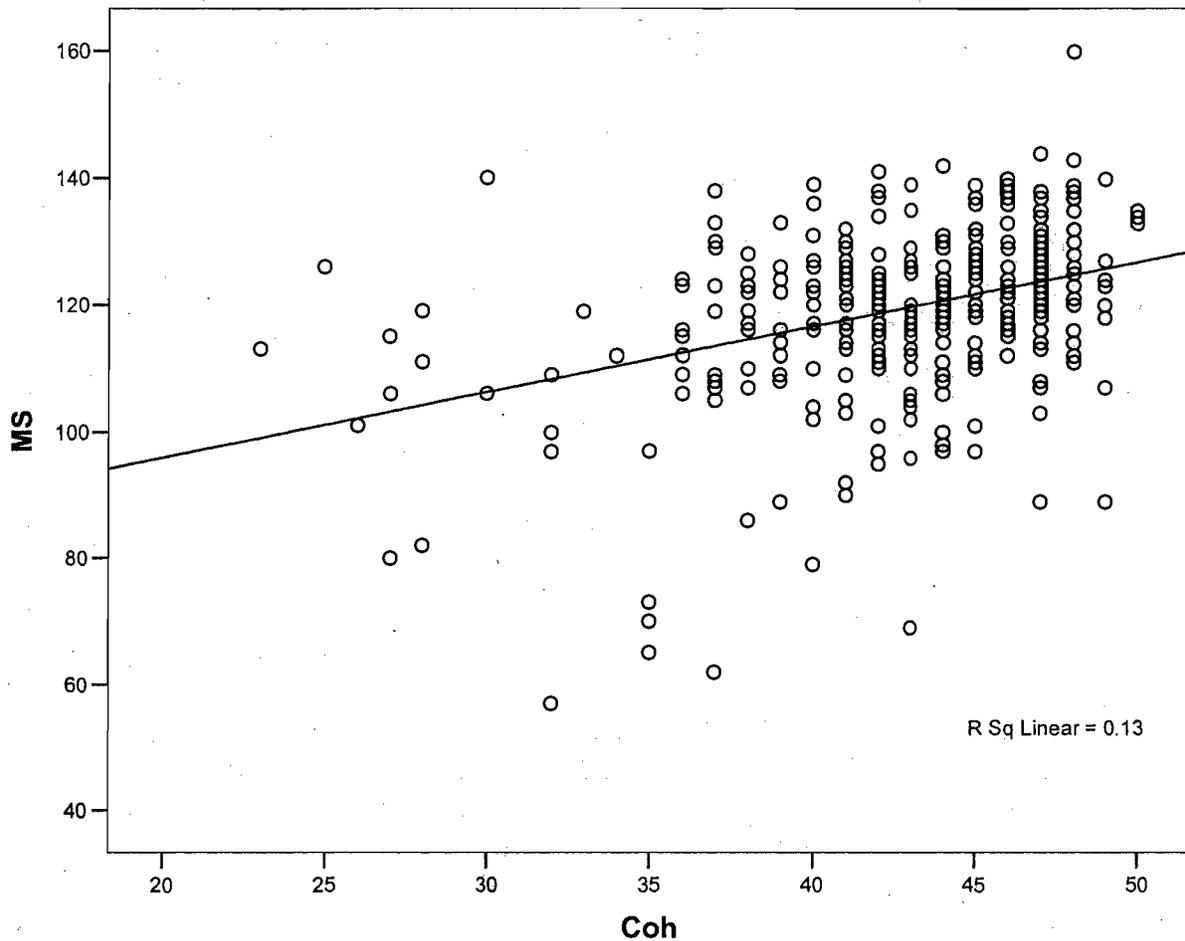


Figure 2  
Scattergram of Positive Relationship between  
Marital Satisfaction and Family Cohesion

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation test was conducted between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and family adaptability score. There was no significant difference found. The mean score for marital satisfaction was 119.17 and the mean score for family adaptability was 22.31 from 356 respondents. However, in this

correlational examination, there was a negative correlation score of  $-.007$ . Significance is determined at the  $.01$  level.

**Research question no. 4. What is the relationship of the Family Life Cycle on either marital satisfaction, family cohesion/adaptability, or both?** A one-factor Analysis of Variance was conducted between the family life cycle (FLC) of each respondent and his/her marital satisfaction score. There was a significant difference found between groups as displayed in Table 17. The significance is scored at  $.052$ .

Table 17  
Analysis of Variance on the Family Life Cycle and Marital Satisfaction

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1078.479	2	539.239	2.981	.052
Within Groups	63848.743	354	180.875		
<i>Total</i>	<i>64927.222</i>	<i>356</i>			

Table 18  
Descriptive Analysis on the Family Life Cycle and Marital Satisfaction

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min. MS Score	Max. MS Score
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	162	117.49	14.387	115.26	119.72	57	144
2	135	119.83	13.384	117.55	122.11	69	150
3	59	122.25	10.602	119.49	125.02	80	142
<i>Total</i>	<i>356</i>	<i>119.17</i>	<i>13.524</i>	<i>117.76</i>	<i>120.58</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>150</i>

The descriptive analysis in Table 18 further displays the mean scores for marital satisfaction increasing as the FLC graduates.

A Tukey post hoc test was conducted to determine which family life cycle (FLC) was more significant. The post hoc test determined that the significance was found between respondents in FLC 1 and respondents in FLC 3. The findings are displayed in Table 19.

Table 19  
Tukey Post Hoc on Family Life Cycle and Marital Satisfaction

(A) FLC	(B) FLC	Mean Difference (A-B)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-2.342	1.567	.295	-6.03	1.35
	3	-4.767	2.045	.053	-9.58	.05
2	1	2.342	1.567	.295	-1.35	6.03
	3	-2.425	2.099	.481	-7.36	2.52
3	1	4.767	2.045	.053	-.05	9.58
	2	2.425	2.099	.481	-2.52	7.36

A Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family life cycle (nursery/preschool, elementary, junior high/senior high/college) with adaptability (chaotic, flexible, structured, and rigid). Data was categorized in a 3-by-4 matrix. The computed  $\chi^2 = 19.18$  was compared to the value score taken from a chi square table with six degrees of freedom. The significance was determined at .004; therefore, a significant statistical difference was found. The findings are displayed in Table 20.

Table 20  
Chi Square Analysis of Family Life Cycle and Adaptability

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.183	6	.004
Likelihood Ratio	18.717	6	.005
N of Valid Cases	356		

ANOVA also discovered that there was a significant difference between family life cycle (FLC) and adaptability at the .005 level (see Table 21). The results determined that adaptability in family units increases as the family life cycle increases. The mean ranges from 21.44 in the early family life cycle, to 22.74 in the middle family life cycle, to 23.73 in the late family life cycle. The results are displayed in Table 22. According to the Norms and Cutting Points for FACES III (Table 23) all of the family life cycles represented in this sample are below the national mean of 24.1.

Table 21  
Analysis of Variance of Family Life Cycle and Adaptability

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	266.921	2	133.460	5.401	.005
Within Groups	8723.470	353	24.712		
Total	8990.390	355			

Table 22  
Means and Standard Deviations for Family Life Cycle and Adaptability

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min. Adapt	Max. Adapt
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	162	21.44	5.365	20.61	22.27	12	45
2	135	22.74	4.484	21.98	23.50	12	35
3	59	23.73	4.905	22.45	25.01	14	35
Total	356	22.31	5.032	21.79	22.84	12	45

A Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family life cycle (nursery/preschool, elementary, junior high/senior high/college) with cohesion (disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed). Data was categorized in a 3-by-4 matrix. The computed  $\chi^2 = 11.90$  was compared to the value score taken from a chi square table with 9 degrees of freedom. The significance was determined at .219; therefore, no significant statistical difference was found.

### Evaluation of Research Design

The overall purpose of this chapter was to report the results of analyses that were conducted on the data collected. Details of the descriptive statistics, correlations, t-tests, ANOVAs, and Cronbach Alphas have been listed in various tables. Six of the research questions subpoints were analyzed by using Pearson product-moment correlation, one was analyzed by a t-test, 10 were analyzed by one-way ANOVAs utilizing 4 of Tukey's post hoc tests, and 8 were analyzed by Chi Square. There was one scattergram used to display the positive relationship between marital satisfaction and family cohesion.

The sample was made up 354 adult married parents from Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa, California. Each participant completed a brief survey that asked for his or her responses to questions concerning marital satisfaction (DAS), family cohesion/adaptability (FACES III), demographics, and church related information. Of the adult married parents who participated in this survey, 111 were male, while 245 were female. Most respondents were between the ages of 30-39, and no person under 20 years of age participated in this survey. The strength of this research methodology allowed this researcher to apply the statistical findings specifically to the sample itself without making generalizations. The obvious weakness however is that this research will be limited to a specific sample of adult married parents in the Southern California area.

This section presented a critical analysis of the research design and the protocols that were employed as well as other pertinent observations that would assist researchers who may choose to advance this investigation of variables related to the family in the future on a more broaden scale. While most of the statistics determined little or no significance, some did show a relationship and these will be discussed in chapter five. There are also other tests that may not have shown significant statistical relationship, but their findings do have importance to this study. These will also be discussed in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

Marriage has been the subject of continuous research by family therapists, counselors, and theorists who have sought to determine what factors contribute to a happy marriage and family relationship. A number of studies have been posited in the past few decades but few conclusive findings have resulted from these efforts. This research investigation sought to explore the relationship, if any, between marital satisfaction and family functioning, specifically, family cohesion and adaptability. Factors that may impact marital satisfaction in relation to one's stage of family life cycle was also explored.

For the purpose of this study, marital satisfaction was defined as a subjective evaluation and a process of achieving congruence, harmony, intimacy, and happiness (Merves-Okin 1982, 33). It is a multi-dimensional concept comprised of "a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of (1) troublesome marital differences; (2) inter-spousal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) marital satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of marital functioning" (Spanier and Cole 1976, 127-28). This description recognizes the dynamic nature of a marital relationship.

For the purpose of this study, family cohesion and adaptability have been defined as "the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group. Inducements to remain in any group include the attractiveness of the group itself and the

strength of the restraints against leaving it; . . . thus the strength of the marital relationship would be a direct function of the attractions within and barriers around the marriage, and an inverse function of such attractions and barriers from other relationships” (Levinger 1965, 19). Adaptability is “the ability of the marital family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress” (Olson et al. 1979, 12).

With these relational structures interplaying throughout a marriage relationship, this study sought to have a better understanding how the family life cycle impacts the complexities of marriage while raising a family. There are three family life cycles according to Cron. The early family life cycle is defined as one who is “married, living with spouse, has one or more children in infancy through age six (normally in the first grade). The average early family life cycle spans six years” (Cron 1994, 9). The middle family life cycle is defined as one who is “married living with spouse, has one or more children, oldest child between age seven (second grade) and age fourteen (ninth grade). The average middle family life cycle spans eight years” (Cron 1994, 9). The late family life cycle is defined as one who is “married living with spouse, has one or more children, oldest child between age 15 (tenth grade) and 21-25 (senior year in college). The average late family life cycle spans six/seven years (Cron 1994, 10).

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship, if any, between factors that effect the development of marital satisfaction and family cohesion/adaptability among evangelical Christian married parents across three family life cycles in a select Southern Californian sample, Rock Harbor Church of Costa Mesa,

California. In addition, the purpose of this study is to further the understanding of Christian marriage and family dynamics while raising children in ways that will allow for Christian educators and ministers to more effectively meet the changing needs in the diverse family structures present in Southern Californian culture.

Through analyzing the marital satisfaction and level of family cohesion among evangelical Christian couples in various stages of parenting, four research questions were explored:

1. What contributing factors characterize the greatest levels of perceived marital satisfaction among evangelical Christian parents?
2. What family types are identified utilizing the *Circumplex Model* for assessing family cohesion/adaptability within the sample of evangelical Christian parents?
3. What relationship, if any, is there between marital satisfaction and family cohesion /adaptability?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between the family life cycle and marital satisfaction, family cohesion/family adaptability, or both?

#### **Research Question No. 1: Implications**

*What contributing factors characterize the greatest levels of perceived marital satisfaction among evangelical Christian parents?*

A variety of factors may influence the marital satisfaction of married parents during the child-rearing years and the family types present in the home. The family type system is assessed by using the Circumplex Model which analyzes cohesion and adaptability factors. Each variable is assessed independently and is given a separate score. The researcher computes the sum score for cohesion by adding the 10 odd items and computes the sum score for adaptability by adding the 10 even items on the FACES III instrument. Next, the researcher locates the corresponding 1-8 score provided in the

scoring and interpretation manual provided by Life Innovations (Olson 1985, 9). After both numbers are located on the 1-8 scale, the two numbers are added together and then divided in two to determine the “type” on the Family Type scale which ranges from 1-8. A score of 1-2 defines an “extreme” family type, a score of 3-6 defines a “mid-range/moderate” family type, and a score of 7-8 defines a “balanced” family type. See Table 23 for details.

Table 23  
FACES III: Linear Scoring and Interpretation

Cohesion			Adaptability			Family Type	
8	50-48	Very Connected (Enmeshed)	8	50-41	Very Flexible (Chaotic)	8	Balanced
7	47-46		7	40-30		7	
6	45-43	Connected	6	29-27	Flexible	6	Moderately Balanced
5	42-41		5	26-25		5	
4	40-38	Separated	4	24-23	Structured	4	Mid-Range
3	37-35		3	22-20		3	
2	34-25	Disengaged	2	19-15	Rigid	2	Extreme
1	24-10		1	14-10		1	

### **Significance between Marital Satisfaction and Family Type**

An Analysis of Variance was conducted between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and the type of family system present to determine significance. The level of significance was a .002 and thus was determined that there was a significant statistical difference between marital satisfaction and family type system in accordance with the Circumplex Model (see Table 2).

A Tukey post hoc test was conducted to determine which family system type(s) had a statistically significant difference. The statistical difference was between family system type 1 (balanced) and family system 2 (mid-range) as well as between family system type 1 (balanced) and family system type 3 (extreme). The results are displayed in Table 3.

Based upon the data, this researcher discovered that marital satisfaction is highest in family system type three (extreme) with a mean score of 122.92. The next highest is found in family system type 2 (mid-range) with a mean score of 120.77, and family system type 1 (balanced) was noted as having the lowest mean score for marital satisfaction at 116.32. The significance was determined at .002 and reflects a strong relationship that cannot be determined merely through chance.

**Assessing significance in married individuals.** This data is interesting for several reasons. First, the extreme family type is the marriage and family unit that scores low on both cohesion and adaptability scales. The data suggests that these families lead independent lives that are extremely structured. One possibility that might influence higher marital satisfaction in this environment might be attributed to the nature of the Southern California lifestyle. Married individuals in this region live busy and productive lives. They may enjoy the independence of living somewhat separate lives while also enjoying the built-in structure of pre-determined household and marital roles for being together. The expectations appear low on each other, but scheduled and with a high level of accountability.

The balanced family (family system type 1) had the lowest mean score. Although this is the grouping that scores highest on both cohesion and adaptability scales,

their marriage and family life may be somewhat chaotic. When marriages are very connected (or enmeshed), partners may experience a feeling of being “smothered” by each other without enough outside influence from other adults. The majority of respondents in this category were women (92 of the 152 respondents). In this study, the women were all mothers and might find that their lives are too enmeshed in child rearing and the duties of being a wife. Also in this category is an adaptability approach that is very flexible and even chaotic. This implies that these couples have little or no structure to roles in the home, child rearing, and time spent together. While this may offer freedom and flexibility, it may also breed insecurity and frustration over time.

The mid-range family (family system type 2) was statistically different from family type 1 (balanced) but not statistically different from family type 3 (extreme). Due to the aforementioned reasons, this group may experience a moderate amount of the structure and independence that brings the extreme family a more significant satisfaction in their marriage satisfaction, but not deal with the frustrations of enmeshment and chaos that the family system type 1 experiences.

This data is interesting from a descriptive analysis point of view, but is not what family researchers might have readily understood. Cohesion has been linked with marital satisfaction in previous studies (Olson 1991, 75-76) and in this study as well, so adding the adaptability scale, one must seek to understand the presence of structure in the paradigm for satisfying marriages.

**Assessing impact on children.** One area not discussed or identified in this study is the effect of the family type 3 on the children present in the home. Do children thrive or find satisfaction in an extreme environment of independence and structure, or do

they thrive in one of the other family type systems? The extreme family type may give adult parents plenty of space for independence, but this researcher is concerned about the ever-growing fragmented family structure that is pervasive in the Southern California lifestyle. If a family scores high on cohesion (very connected) and low on adaptability (very structured), this family type would be classified in the moderate/mid-range family type. It is this researcher's opinion that although the marital scores may not be as high, the children present in the home might experience a more ideal environment for nurture. Further longitudinal studies in this area will need to be conducted in order to understand the effect of family type on the children present in the home over time.

#### **Assessing Significance between Marital Satisfaction and Family Income**

A one-factor Analysis of Variance between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and the family income level was conducted to determine significance. There was no significant difference found, but a descriptive analysis was conducted in order to determine mean and standard deviation between the marital satisfaction scores and family income level. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Although no significance was found from a statistical perspective, this information is worth noting here in regards to marital satisfaction or happiness. This data informs the family researcher that there is no relationship between a married persons happiness/satisfaction and their combined income level. According to Table 4, there is a difference in the means of those in the lowest income group (<\$30,000) with a mean score of 112.00 for marital satisfaction and those in the highest income group (>\$115,000) with a mean score of 121.41 for marital satisfaction. However, the second

lowest income group (\$30,000-\$44,999), a relatively low income for living and raising children in Orange County according to the O.C. Register (2006), had a mean score of 118.35 for marital satisfaction as opposed to the second highest income group (\$90,000-\$114,999) who had a mean score of 117.76 for marital satisfaction.

What is important for researchers to understand is that there are many more important factors that effect the satisfaction and even success of marriage relationships than that of income. According to this study, the mean for marital satisfaction was rated at 119.17 (see Table 9). Those whose marital satisfaction scores are 119.17 or higher are determined to be experiencing high marital satisfaction. When this score is compared to those in the income groups, only two out of seven groups qualify, groupings 4 (\$60,000-\$74,999) and 7 (>\$115,000). Researchers need to continue to explore factors that do significantly influence marital satisfaction in order for families to experience a positive relationship and offer the benefits of this union to their children.

#### **Significance between Marital Satisfaction and Years Married to Spouse**

An AVOVA was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the marital satisfaction score of the respondent and the number of years married to his or her current spouse. It was determined that there was a significance of .017. The results are detailed in Table 8. In addition, the mean scores range from 120.93 to 124.55 with a two identical low means of 117.33 for marriage categories two (five-nine years) and three (ten-fourteen years) as displayed in Table 9.

The significance pattern that was determined was that the first four years of marriage are the second highest in terms of marital satisfaction with a mean score of

120.93. This score compared with the mean for this study (119.17) reveals that the young married parents in this study rank high in marital satisfaction. As couples enter into the next season of their marriage, they enter a consistent period of low marital satisfaction (117.33) for a period of up to nine years. These are the years that couples phase out of the “honeymoon” period, have children, experience the demands of work, pursue further education, and even purchase their first home.

Research indicates that the majority of divorces take place between years 5 and 14 (Cherlin 1981; Shapiro et al. 2000) and so this body of research strengthens the theories that have preceded it. What is encouraging, however, is that if married couples can endure and productively survive the challenges of these years (less than one decade), the reward is great. Married persons in this study that had been married 15 to 19 years grow in their satisfaction mean score to 119.93, and those who have been married over 20 years jump to a mean score of 124.55, which is 8.022 standard deviations above the norm. Contributing factors may include parents who have raised their children or are more comfortable in their parent-rearing style, a greater understanding to their mate and his or her needs, financial freedom, job security, and personal growth, among other factors. This statistical information is encouraging to those who choose to not make divorce an option due to low marital satisfaction.

### **Recognizing Insignificant Factors on Marital Satisfaction**

Ultimately there were only two factors, family system type and years married to current spouse, that were statistically significant to marital satisfaction. Other factors such as age, income, gender, number of children, and level of education were determined

to have no significant relationship with marital satisfaction in this sample. Other precedent research concurs with age, education, income, and number of children, and has found gender to be inconclusive depending on which study is analyzed. Edman found support for the hypothesized relationship that balanced cohesion and adaptability is related to higher levels of marital satisfaction, whereas in this study the more extreme group reported higher levels of marital satisfaction (Edman 1985). Sefton also found the relationship between married couples and their perceived level of adaptability and cohesion significant (Sefton 1985).

Lee observed marital satisfaction in the later years of marriage and discovered that the length of marriage was not significantly related to marital satisfaction. In this study, the number of years married to current spouse was studied. These are similar (but yet distinct) classifications. In this study, the respondents were increasingly more satisfied with their marriages the longer that they were married. It was also found that having children at home is negatively correlated to marital satisfaction (Lee 1988, 778), yet in this study, there was no significance in the number of children present adversely affecting marital satisfaction. This study did not, however, study those without children present in the home with those who have children present, since all the respondents reported having at least one child living at home.

This body of research builds upon the plethora of information regarding the nuances of marital happiness structures and discovered that this select Southern California sample is both similar and distinct to other groupings that have been studied. Since there were found two areas where significance were found, it would be beneficial

to glean further understanding regarding these factors of family system type and years married to one's current spouse, for ongoing research in the area of marital satisfaction.

### **Research Question No. 2: Implications**

*What family types are identified within the Circumplex Model for assessing family cohesion/adaptability within the sample of evangelical Christian parents?*

A variety of factors may influence the manner in which married parents interact with each other and their children during the child-rearing years. Elements regarding how a family bonds (cohesion) and adapts is manifested within differing family types present in any given home. The family type system is assessed by using the Circumplex Model which analyzes cohesion and adaptability factors as previously mentioned in this chapter.

### **Significance between Family System Type and Years Married to Spouse**

A Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family system type (balanced, mid-range, and extreme) with number of years married to one's current spouse. Data was categorized in a 3-by-5 matrix. There was a statistical significance found in the data as displayed in Table 12. The significance was determined at .009 and therefore a significant statistical difference was found.

Since there was a significant difference found, a cross-tabulation was conducted to determine which family system type grouping is statistically more significant. The results determined that families married in the third category (10-14 years) were operating in a *more* balanced family type system than would be expected through chance, while those married in the fifth category (over 20 years) were operating

in a *less* balanced family type system than would be expected through chance. The results are displayed in Table 13.

Understanding how this informs the participants in this study, one must understand the typical patterns for marriage during the family life cycle. Precedent literature describes the married persons progressing toward a more moderate way of living in cohesion and adaptability throughout their years together. For example, Hill and Rodgers perceived that the changing roles of adults were determined by events during the life cycle stages that allowed them greater adaptability (Rodgers 1964). It is worthy to note, however, that some problems have arisen concerning life cycle staging according to events due in part to isolating the sequencing of events in marriages followed by divorce or remarriage (Norton 1980, 63). Therefore, partially due to a survival mentality, the marriages and family units who stay together over the entirety of the family life cycle bond and adapt in ways that bring extreme and even balanced perspectives into a more moderate methodology of living life as married persons in community with one another.

The implications of the sample used in this study shows that the young families are adapting earlier (that what is expected) to a more mid-range/moderate family system type. Conversely, older family units are less moderate than what would be expected for couples and families that have been together for 20-plus years. What is interesting about this research sample, is that it was determined that marital satisfaction was linked to a more extreme family type system and that the most satisfied married parents were those who had been married for 20 years or longer. In light of this discovery, it makes sense that those who are in the late family life stage are less moderate

than would be expected, and for this community that seems to indicate a greater sense of happiness in their marital relationship.

### **Recognizing Insignificant Factors on Family System Type**

Most of the factors studied had little or no significance of the family system type of the respondents in this survey. Factors such as income, education, age, gender, number of children present in the home, and family life cycle did little, if anything, to impact the method in which a family determines cohesion and adaptability within their relationships. While most of the demographic issues have previously been explored, the family life cycle has little precedent research. More recently the family life cycle has been understood in the context of the amount, age, and spacing of children as a way to adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of family structure and cohesiveness (Glick 1988, 864) and therefore was thought worthy of investigating in its relationship to the family system type.

This study utilized the FACES III instrument in order to understand family dynamics across the family life cycle with a large variety in individuals. It is used to assess family cohesion and adaptability and allows the researcher to classify members into 16 specific types (Figure 1) or three more general types, which include balanced, mid-range, and extreme (Crouch 1993, 50-51). In the sample used for this study, 15 of the 16 family system types were represented. The only system not represented in the sample was system type number 1, which ranks highest in adaptability (often classified as *chaotic*) and lowest on the cohesion scale (*disengaged*). It is this researcher's opinion that family system type one would be the least conducive environment for child-rearing.

Since this structural perspective has proven to be a valuable theoretical approach for understanding the family dynamics and interactions, it is interesting to note that for this study, the theoretical constructs which have been proposed as facilitative of adaptive coping behavior such as the concepts of family modeling, family support systems, and balance within the family environment (Olson et al. 1983, 56-60) are virtually unaffected by issues such as gender, income, age, and education in any way. Therefore, family characteristics such as family harmony, adaptability, communication style, and satisfaction with family life may be directly affected by other factors that impact the coping strategies of family members, and in so doing, mediate the level of individual and family stress. Such factors are outside the scope of this study at this time, but are worthy of further investigation.

### **Research Question No. 3: Implications**

*What relationship, if any, is there between marital satisfaction and family cohesion/family adaptability?*

A variety of factors may influence the marital satisfaction of married parents during the child-rearing years and the family types present in the home. The family type system is assessed by using the Circumplex Model which analyzes cohesion and adaptability factors. By using the method for scoring detailed aforementioned in this chapter, one can isolate the cohesion factor alone or the adaptability factor alone to determine if cohesion or adaptability, as opposed to the entire family system type, are individually statistically significant in relationship to marital satisfaction.

### **Significance between Marital Satisfaction and Cohesion/Adaptability**

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation test was conducted between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and family cohesion score. There was a significant difference found. The mean score for marital satisfaction was 119.17, and the mean score for family cohesion was 42.54 from 356 respondents as seen in Tables 15 and 16.

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation test was conducted between the marital satisfaction score of respondents and family adaptability score. There was no significant difference found. The mean score for marital satisfaction was 119.17, and the mean score for family adaptability was 22.31 from 356 respondents. However, in this correlational examination, there was a negative correlation score of  $-.007$ . Significance is determined at the  $.01$  level.

According to the Norms and Cutting Points for FACES III (Table 23) both the mean score for this sample's adaptability score (22.31), as well as the individual means for the three life cycles (Table 22), are all below the national mean of 24.1, whereas the cohesion mean score for this study is 42.54, which is higher than the mean score for cohesion (39.8) at the national level.

Table 24  
*Norms and Cutting Points for FACES III*

<i>Cohesion</i>		Range	%
	Disengaged	10-34	16.3
	Separated	35-40	33.8
	Connected	41-45	36.3
	Enmeshed	46-50	13.6
		<i>N Mean: 39.8*</i>	
<i>Adaptability</i>			
	Rigid	10-19	16.3
	Structured	20-24	38.3
	Flexible	25-28	29.4
	Chaotic	29-50	16.0
		<i>N Mean: 24.1*</i>	

*\*N=2453 adults in all family life cycles*

(adapted from Olson, 1985)

What is significant about this data is that cohesion, not adaptability has been more readily associated with marital satisfaction. Thus, higher scores in cohesion display a higher sense of marital satisfaction. Components measured within cohesion consist of issues such as emotional bonding, decision-making, family boundaries, time, and friends. The adaptability construct measures components such as leadership, control, discipline, roles, and rules (Olson 1991, 75-76).

The data determined a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and family cohesion with a positive correlation score of .360. Significance was determined at the .01 level. Both marital satisfaction and cohesion rise in a correlational pattern as displayed in the scattergram provided in Table 17. This data also determined that there was no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and family adaptability.

While this data cannot assume that one of the variables causes the other to rise, this discovery does demonstrate that where families in this study who scored higher on marital satisfaction would also score higher in their family cohesion score and visa versa.

If assumptions regarding how a specific couple experiences marital satisfaction and cohesion can be identified, then that couple can expect that both will continue to rise in correlation to each other in a symbiotic manner.

#### **Research Question No. 4: Implications**

*What is the relationship of the family life cycle on either marital satisfaction, family cohesion/family adaptability, or both?*

The family life cycle has been studied in a variety of ways. There was little conclusive data on whether or not the impact was linear or curvilinear (Valliant and Valliant 1993; Glenn 1990; Van Laningham 2001). The lack of longitudinal studies in the area of life cycle theory has led to the limited conclusive theory regarding the relationship it has on the marriage and family. For the purpose of this study, family life cycle was discussed in three phases according to the precedent literature (Cron 1994).

#### **Significance between Family Life Cycle and Marital Satisfaction**

A one-factor Analysis of Variance was conducted between the family life cycle (FLC) of each respondent and his/her marital satisfaction score. There was a significant difference found between groups as displayed in Table 17. The descriptive analysis in Table 18 further displays the mean scores for marital satisfaction increasing as the FLC graduates. A Tukey post hoc test determined which family life cycle (FLC) was more significant. The post hoc test determined that the significance was found between respondents in FLC 1 and respondents in FLC 3. The findings are displayed in Table 19.

Respondents in FLC 3 (whose oldest child is between the ages of 15 and 25 years) experienced the most satisfaction in marriage with a mean score of 122.25. Those

in FLC 1 (whose oldest child is between the ages of birth and 6 years) experienced the least satisfaction in marriage with a mean score of 117.49. The mean score for high marital satisfaction for this study is 119.17 and therefore those in FLC 1 are not experiencing high marital satisfaction and those in FLC 3 are experiencing high marital satisfaction.

These findings were in congruence with some precedent literature which found that marital satisfaction increased over the span of the family life cycle (Medling and McCarrey 1981) and in conflict with other studies that display a U-shape distribution of marital bliss in early family life stages, a decline, and then another surge of marital satisfaction at the empty-nest stage of life (Burr, 1970; Blood and Wolfe 1960). This study had the fewest respondents in FLC 3 (only 59 of 356) and therefore a greater number of respondents may be needed in order to make more conclusive observations can be determined.

### **Significance between Family Life Cycle and Adaptability**

Mathis and Tanner researched cohesion, adaptability, and satisfaction in couples who were sixty-five and older. They found that later life couples were significantly more satisfied with their families than were couples from a national sample drawn from across other family life cycles. In addition, adaptability was so high that it is placed them in an unhealthy range according to the Circumplex Model (Mathis and Tanner 1991, 47). As stated before, the increase in adaptability may be due in part to a greater survival effect. Further research in longitudinal studies is needed to determine if

greater adaptability increases marital satisfaction over the life cycle, or if simply staying in a consistent marital relationship produces a greater level of adaptation.

In this study, a Chi Square test for independence was conducted comparing family life cycle (nursery/preschool, elementary, junior high/senior high/college) with adaptability (chaotic, flexible, structured, and rigid). The significance was determined at .004; therefore, a significant statistical difference was found. The findings are displayed in Table 20.

ANOVA also discovered that there was a significant difference between family life cycle (FLC) and adaptability at the .005 level (see Table 21). The results determined that adaptability in family units increases as the family life cycle increases. The mean ranges from 21.44 in the early family life cycle, to 22.74 in the middle family life cycle, to 23.73 in the late family life cycle. The results are displayed in Table 22. According to the Norms and Cutting Points for FACES III (Table 24), even though the adaptability increases over the life cycle, all of the family life cycles represented in this sample are below the national mean of 24.1.

This study reflects that there is a relationship between FLC and adaptability. Factors that constitute adaptability such as leadership, control, discipline, roles, and rules (Olson 1991, 75-76) may be higher in application in family units that have simply had more experience in child-rearing. Confidence in the family structure may also contribute to families higher in adaptability. Again, it is difficult to determine if adaptability allows the family longevity and enables them to reach the late family life cycle or if adaptability is merely a bi-product of the late family life cycle. Certainly, further research will be needed in order to understand why this relationship occurs.

## Research Applications

The applications for those seeking to educate and minister to married adult parents in the twenty-first century are rich. Specifically, this study was conducted at Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa, California and its applications can be made directly and specifically to the over 700 family units that are a part of that congregation. However, since the data often was in alignment with precedent findings, there are some applications that might be helpful in other settings as well.

One of the most dramatic findings from this research is the relationship between years married to current spouse and marital satisfaction. This research found a positive correlation between the two variables. With the increase of divorce in our society and the great concern that this has become for Christian leaders in the church, it is encouraging to note that this body of data describes a significant increase in marital satisfaction for those who remain in marriage through the turbulent years. The respondents who had been married for twenty or more years experienced the highest mean of marital satisfaction. Church leaders can find effective ways to highlight this information and even pair up mentor couples with younger couples who are in the difficult years of child-rearing and young marriages.

Another significant finding that also relates to the number of years married to one's current spouse was found to be in positive relationship with the family system type. While most precedent literature found a relationship between a moderate family system type and years married, this study found the correlation to be between the extreme family system and years married. This may suggest that married adults have become satisfied with living independent and separated lives, or that married adults enjoy the structure that

comes from how and when they interact together. This is possibly one of the factors that is unique to this sample of individuals and certainly further research is needed, but implications for this sample might include the church offering structured opportunities for couples to enjoy bonding experiences together such as couples retreats and family enriching experiences.

In light of the aforementioned, it was also determined that there is a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and cohesion. Therefore opportunities for couples to have opportunities to bond and connect in relevant ways earlier in their marriages might be able to counteract the low marital satisfaction that many couples experience for the 9 years between years 5 and 14 of their marriages. Church ministries might include opportunities for couples to enjoy date nights while their children have fun activities provided for them at the church, or simply older couples adopting younger couples to add support and relief during these years of declined satisfaction. This encouragement can bring both increased satisfaction and even hope for a more satisfying season to come.

Lastly, the late family life cycle was found in positive correlation to both marital satisfaction and adaptability. As previously mentioned, both of these variables need further investigation, yet the hope that both of these offer young couples is pertinent to ministry to this next generation of families to stay committed to their spouse and their children. The heritage of Christian evangelical parents is to offer healthy building blocks for the future generations by remaining faithful to their marriage vows and their blessings to raise the children and God entrusted to their care throughout the entire family life span.

### **Further Research**

Several components of this research would benefit from further study and investigation. These include, but are not limited to, the relationship between family life cycle and adaptability, marital satisfaction and cohesion, family system type (according to the Circumplex Model) and years married to one's current spouse, marital satisfaction and years married to one's current spouse, and marital satisfaction over the span of the family life cycle. Certainly the need for longitudinal studies is necessary at every level of understanding the marriage and family unit.

Each of these areas either showed little or significant statistical relationship in this study. However, the limited nature of this study prevents conclusive evidence toward the determination of the effect that these factors have on each other. In addition, in some cases the respondents or those in the sample were too few to make conclusive determinations. Other areas for investigation would involve how these factors differ across differing cross-cultural perspectives and diverse religious orientations, as this study focused on primarily one cultural and religious perspective.

The family unit is dynamic and is ever-changing. Those seeking to educate or minister to members of the family in the twenty-first century will need to be well-equipped with empirical data in the areas of family life cycle, marital trends (including satisfaction, divorce, and remarriage), family cohesion, family adaptability, and the effect of the family system types. This body of research serves to add to the understanding of the unique differences and nuances that make up the organism that God created as the family.

## APPENDIX 1

## ROCKHARBOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY SURVEY

ROCKHARBOR is genuinely concerned about how we can support and strengthen marriages/families in our church. The following information will help us provide resources and materials for that purpose. This is an **anonymous** survey so please do not attach anything that will identify yourself. It is intended only for those adults who are currently married AND have dependent children living at home with them. Thank you for your participation.

*Michelle Anthony*  
Director of Family Ministries

## Part I

1. What is your gender?     Male             Female
  
2. How many years have you been married to your current spouse?
  - 1 – 4 years
  - 5 – 9 years
  - 10 – 14 years
  - 15 – 19 years
  - over 20 years
  
3. How many dependent children to you have living in your home?
  - 1     4
  - 2     5
  - 3     6
  - more than 6
  
4. What is the age of your oldest child living at home? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What is your current family income?
  - Less than \$30, 000
  - \$ 30,000 to \$ 44,999
  - \$ 45,000 to \$ 59,999
  - \$ 60,000 to \$ 74,999
  - \$ 75,000 to \$ 89,999
  - \$ 90,000 to \$ 114,999
  - \$ 115,000 +

6. What is your level of education?

- High school diploma  
 College degree  
 Graduate degree

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. What category includes your age?

- 20 to 29 years old  
 30 to 39 years old  
 40 to 49 years old  
 50 to 59 years old  
 60+ years old

## Part II

Each family does things differently. We are interested in how you see your family. Please read the descriptive sentences below and rate your family according to the statements numbered 1 (Almost Never) through 5 (Almost Always). Write the corresponding number in the space provided.

---

1 ALMOST NEVER	2 ONCE IN A WHILE	3 SOMETIMES	4 FREQUENTLY	5 ALMOST ALWAYS
----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------

---

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



	Every day	Almost every day	Occas- ionally	Rarely	Never
23. Do you kiss your mate?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

How often would you say that the following events occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or- twice a week	Once a day	More often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
26. Laugh together	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
27. Calmly discuss something	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
28. Work together on a project	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

There are some things about which couples sometime agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Circle yes or no)

- |                             |     |    |
|-----------------------------|-----|----|
| 29. Being too tired for sex | Yes | No |
| 30. Not showing love        | Yes | No |

31. The "X's" on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy" represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the "X" which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?  
(Circle only one letter)

- I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
- I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
- I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
- It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
- It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I refuse to do anymore than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

## REFERENCE LIST

- Anderson, Stephen A., Candyce S. Russell, and Walter R. Schumm. 1983. Perceived marital quality and family life cycle categories: A further analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 45: 127-139.
- Anthony, Michael J. 1991. *The relationship between marital satisfaction and religious orientation among evangelical Christian couples*. A dissertation from Claremont Graduate School. Claremont, CA.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. The relationship between marital satisfaction and religious maturity. *Religious Education*, 88 (1): 97-108.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. 2001. Evangelical dictionary of Christian education. *Children's ministry and Christian education* by Michelle Anthony. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Arterburn, Stephen, Kenny Luck, and Todd Wendorff. 2003. *Being God's man ... in leading a family*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press.
- Ault, Nancy. 2001. Spiritual life as a journey: A metaphor of exclusion for children? *Journal of Christian Education* 44 (1): 29-37.
- Bain, A. 1978. The capacity of families to cope with transitions: A theoretical essay. *Human Relations* 31: 675-88.
- Balswick, J. O. and C. Macrides. 1975. Parental stimulus for adolescent rebellion. *Adolescence* 10: 253-66.
- Barna, George. 2003. *Transforming children into spiritual champions*. Ventura, CA: Regal.
- Baynham, M. 2004. How important is spirituality? *News Religion* 18 (3): 7.
- Beavers, W. Robert, and Mark N. Voeller. 1983. Family models: Comparing and contrasting the Olson Circumplex model with the Beavers system model. *Family Process* 22: 85-98.

- Belsky, J., M. Lang, and M. Rovine. 1985. Stability and change in marriage across the transition to parenthood: A second study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47 (10): 855-65.
- Belsky, J., G. Spanier, and M. Rovine. 1983. Stability and change in marriage across the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 45 (3): 567-77.
- Benin, M. H., and B. C. Nienstedt. 1985. Happiness in single and dual career families: The effects of marital happiness, job satisfaction, and life cycle. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47: 975-84.
- Bessac, Martha S. 1986. *The relationship of marital satisfaction to selected individual, relational, and institutional variables of student couples at southwestern Baptist theological seminary*, Ed.D. Dissertation. Fort Worth, TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- Borg, Walter, and Meredith Gall. 1983. *Educational research*. New York, NY: Longman Inc.
- Borg, Walter, Meredith Gall, and J.P. Gall. 1996. *Educational research: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.
- Bossard, James H., and Eleanor Boll. 1955. Marital unhappiness in the life cycle. *Marriage and Family Living* 17: 10-14.
- Bowen, M. The family as a unit of study and treatment. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 31: 40-60.
- Bradbury, Thomas N., Frank D. Fincham, and Steven R. H. Beach. 2000. Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62 (4): 964-980.
- Broderick, C. B. 1988. *Marriage and the family*. Kenmore, WA: Touchstone Books.
- Browning, Don. 2005. Good Christian men: How faith shapes fathers. *Christian Century* 122 (1): 18.
- Broudy, Harry S. 1961. *Building a philosophy of education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bunge, M. 2001. *The child in Christian thought*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. Rediscovering the dignity and complexity of children: Resources from the Christian tradition. *Journal from Sewanee Theological Review* 48 (1): 1-7.

- Burgess, E.W., and L. Cotterell. 1936. The prediction of adjustment in marriage. *American Sociological Review* 10 (October): 737-51.
- Burr, W.R. 1970. Satisfaction with various aspects of marriage over the life cycle: A random middle class sample. *Journal of Marriage and Family* February (32): 29-37.
- Carey, M. P., I. P. Spector, I. J. Lantinga, and D. J. Krauss. 1993. Reliability of the dyadic adjustment scale. *Psychological Assessment* 5: 238-40.
- Caroll, John T. 2001. Children in the Bible. *Interpretation* 55 (2): 121-135.
- Chambliss, J.J., ed. 1996. *Philosophy of education: An encyclopedia*. New York, NY: Garland Publishers.
- Chapman, Gary. 1997. *Five signs of a loving family*. Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing.
- Charry, Ellen T. 2000. Who's minding the children? *Theology Today* 56 (4): 451-55.
- Cherlin, A. 1981. *Marriage, divorce, and remarriage*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clark, C. A., E. L. Worthington, and D. B. Danser. 1988. The transmission of religious beliefs and practices from parents to first born early adolescent sons. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 50: 463-72.
- Collins, R., and P.J. Cooper. 1997. *The power of story: Teaching through storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Gorsuch Publishers.
- Conn, Joann. 1999. Spiritual formation. *Theology Today* 56 (1): 86-97.
- Corey, Gerald. 1982. *Groups: Process and practice*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
- Cowan, C.P. and P.A. Cowan. 1992. *When partners become parents*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. Interventions to ease the transition to parenthood: Why they are needed and what they can do. *Family Relations* 44: 412-423.
- Crohan, S. E., and J. Veroff. 1989. Dimensions of marital well-being among white and black newlyweds. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51: 373-384.
- Cron, Elyce A. 1994. *Marital satisfaction, adaptability, and cohesion as predictor of job satisfaction for dual-career women across three family life cycle stages*. Toledo, OH: University of Toledo.

- Cuber, John F., and Peggy B. Harroff. 1965. *The significant Americans: A study of sexual behavior among the affluent*. New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Daniel, Lillian. 2005. Kids stuff: Raising children in a consumer culture. *Christian Century* 122 (1): 22.
- Davis, C. 1979. *Children and the Christian faith*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.
- Davis, K., and P. van den Oever. 1982. Demographic foundations of new sex roles. *Populations and Development Review* 8: 495-511.
- Dawn, Marva, J. 1999. Christ as the logos of childhood: Reflections on the meaning and mission of the child. *Theology Today* 56 (1): 73-85.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999b. Until Christ formed in you: Nurturing the spirituality of children. *Theology Today* 56: 86-94.
- Demos, J. 1982. *The changing faces of fatherhood: A new exploration in American family history*. In S.H. Cath, A.R. Gurwitt, and J.M. Ross. Eds. *Father and child: Developmental and clinical perspectives*. Boston, MA: Little and Brown.
- Devlin, F. 2004. How can we foster spirituality in our children's lives? *The Family Project*, E1-E3.
- Dixon, Cynthia K. 2001. Nurturing the spirit of quenching it through coercion? An exploration of the tensions in nurturing children. *Journal of Christian Education*. 44 (1): 15-27.
- Dobson, James. 2004. *Marriage under fire: Why we must win this battle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers.
- Douglas, D.S. 2004. Real kids, real faith: Practices for nurturing children's spiritual lives. *Journal from the Christian Century* 121 (14): 1-2.
- Druckman, J. M. 1979. A family-oriented policy and treatment program for female juvenile status offenders. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 41 (3): 627-36.
- Edmonds, V., G. Withers, and B. Dibatista. 1967. Marriage conventionalization: Definition and measurement. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 29: 681-88.
- Eldredge, John, and Stasi Eldredge. 2005. *Captivating: Unveiling the mystery of a woman's soul*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Erel, O., and B. Burman. 1995. Interrelatedness of marital relations and parent-child relations: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin* 118: 108-32.

- Erikson, Millard J. 1998. *Christian theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Evans, Nancy J., and Paul A. Jarvis. 1980. Group cohesion: A review and reevaluation. *Small Group Behavior* 11: 359-70.
- Feldman, H., and M. Feldman. 1975. The family life cycle: Some suggestions for recycling. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 37: 277-84.
- Feldman, R.S. ed., 2003. *Development across the life span*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Filsinger, E., and M. Wilson. 1984. Religiosity, socioeconomic rewards, and family development: Predictors of marital adjustment. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 46 (3): 663-69.
- Foley, Vincent D. 1979. Family therapy. In Raymond J. Corsini, *Current Psychotherapies*. Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers.
- Fortosis, Steve. 1992. A developmental model for stages of growth in Christian formation. *Religious Education* 87 (2): 283-98.
- Foster, Marilynne. 2001. *Voices on the family*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications.
- Fowler, J.W. 1981. *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row.
- Frumkin, R. M. 1955. Factors in a successful marriage: A review of major research findings. *Journal of Human Relations* 3: 76-79.
- Fuller, Cheri. 1999. *When families pray*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers.
- Garland, Diana R. 2004. The changing family. *Review and Expositor* 90 (4): 455-73.
- Geisler, Norman L. 1978. *The roots of evil*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Geringer, J. 2003. Stories from the heart. *Children Education International*, Spring, 12-13.
- Glass, Shirley, P., and Thomas L. Wright. 1977. The Relationship of extramarital sex, length of marriage, and sex differences on marital satisfaction and romanticism: Anthanasiou's data reanalyzed. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (39): 691-703.
- Glenn, N. D. 1990. Qualitative research on marital quality in the 1980's: A critical review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52: 818-31

- Glenn, N. D., and C. N. Weaver. 1978. A multivariate, multisurvey study of marital happiness. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 40: 269-82.
- Glick, Paul C. 1955. The life cycle of the family. *Marriage and Family Living* 19: 12-39.
- Gottman, J. M. 1994. What predicts divorce? *The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gray, L. R. 1981. *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co.
- Gresh, Dannah. 2004. *And the bride wore white: Seven secrets to sexual purity*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.
- Griggs, P. 1981. *Using storytelling in Christian education*. Camp Hill, PA: Abingdon Press.
- Groome, Thomas. 1980. *Christian religious education*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row.
- Gundry-Volf, Judith. 2000. To such as these belongs the reign of God: Jesus and children. *Theology Today* 56: 469-80.
- Gutmann, D. 1975. Parenthood: A key to the comparative study of the life cycle. In N. Daton and L. H. Ginsberg (Eds.) *Lifespan developmental psychology: Normal life crisis*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Habermas, Ronald, and Klaus Issler. 1992. *Teaching for reconciliation: Foundations and practice of Christian education ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Haley, J. 1973. *The psychiatric techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Hamel, Ken. 1996. Online Bible software. Oakhurst, NJ: Ken Hamel Publishers, Version 2.5.3.
- Hansen, G. L. 1987. The effect of religiosity on factors predicting marital adjustment. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 50: 264-69.
- Hart, C.H. 2000. Parents do matter: Combating the myths that parents don't matter. *Marriage and Families* 8: 2-8.
- Heap, Ken. 1978. *Group therapy for social workers*. New York, NY: Pergamon Press.
- Hendrick, Susan S. 1988. A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 50: 93-98.

- Henry, Carl F.H. 1957. *Christian personal ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Herafeld, Noreen. 2004. Video shootout: The games kids play. *Christian Century* 121 (9): 22.
- Heskett, Randall J. 2001. Between text and sermon: Proverbs 23:13-14. *Interpretation*, 55 (2): 181-184.
- Hicks, Mary W., and Marilyn Platt. 1970. Marital Happiness and Stability: A review of the research in the sixties. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (32): 553-71.
- Hill, R. 1949. *Families under stress*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1971. Modern systems theory and the family: A confrontation. *Social Science Information* 10: 7-26.
- Hill, R., and R. Rodgers. 1964. *The developmental approach*. In Harold T. Christensen (ed.), *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs. 1982. *Trends in marriage and divorce*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Hobbs, D. F., and J. Wimbish. 1983. Transition to parenthood for black couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (39): 677-89.
- Hoecker, Maria J. 2004. Children in the kingdom. *Sewanee Theological Review* 48:39-50.
- Hoffman, L., and R. Manis. 1975. The value of children to parents and the decrease in family size. *Proceedings* 119 (6): 450-76.
- Holden, George W. 2001. Psychology, religion, and the family: It's time for a revival. *Journal of Family Psychology* 15 (4): 657-62.
- Homans, G. C. 1950. *The human group*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.
- Hughes, Kent and Barbara Hughes. 2004. *Disciplines of a godly family*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Hunneshagen, Dean M. 2002. Discipleship training of children and youth. *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 41 (3): 190-96.

- Hunsley, John, C. Pinsent, M. Lefebvre, S. James-Tanner, and D. Vito. 1995. Assessment of couples, marriages, and families: Construct validity of the short forms of the dyadic adjustment scale. *Family Relations* 44: 231-37.
- Hyde, B. 2004. Children's spirituality and "the good shepherd experience." *Journal of Religious Education* 99 (2): 1-6.
- Ingle, C., ed. 1970. *Children and conversion*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.
- Issler, Klaus. 2001. *Wasting time with God: A Christian spirituality of friendship with God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Johnson, David R., Lynn K. White, John N. Edwards, and Alan Booth. 1986. Dimensions of marital quality: Toward methodological and conceptual refinement. *Journal of Family Issues* 7: 31-49.
- Kantor, D., and W. Lehr. 1975. *Inside the family*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Keely, B.A. 2000. Spiritual formation resources for children and youth. *The Clergy Journal* 77 (2): 1-2.
- Kelly, G. K. 1939. Concerning the ability of Terman's weights for predicting marital happiness. *Psychological Bulletin* 36 (3): 195-207.
- Kieren, Dianne, and Irving Tallman. 1972. Spousal adaptability: An assessment of marital competence. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 5: 112-120.
- Kingston, P. W., and S. L. Nock. 1987. Time together among dual-career couples. *American Sociological Review* 52: 31-49.
- Kirkpatrick, C. 1937. Statistical investigation of the psychoanalytic theory of mate selection. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 32: 427-30.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1937b. Community of interest and the measurement of marriage adjustment. *Family*, 18: 133-37.
- Knight, George R. 1998. *Philosophy and education: An introduction in Christian perspective*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press.
- Kramlinger, Tom, and Tom Huberty. 1990. Behaviorism versus humanism. *Training and Development Journal* 44 (12): 41.
- Kurdek, Lawrence A. 1996. Parenting satisfaction and marital satisfaction in mothers and fathers with young children. *Journal of Family Psychology* 10 (3): 331-42.

- L'Abate, L., and D. Bagarozzi. 1993. *Sourcebook of marriage and family evaluation*. New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel.
- Lancaster, Jane, Jeanne Altmann, Alice Rossi, and Lonnie Sherrod. eds. 1987. *Parenting across the life span: Biosocial dimensions*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Land, Richard, and John Perry. 2002. *For faith and family: Changing America by strengthening the family*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Lauer, Jeanette C., and Robert H. Lauer. 1986. *'Til death do us part*. New York, NY: Huntington Park Press.
- Lee, Gary R. 1988. Marital satisfaction in later life: The effects of nonmarital roles. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 50: 775-83.
- Leman, Kevin. 2002. *Keeping your family strong in a world gone wrong*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Levinger, George. 1965. Marital cohesiveness and dissolution: An integrative review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (27): 19-28.
- Lewis, Robert, and Graham B. Spanier. 1979. *Theorizing about the quality and stability of marriage*, in *Contemporary theories about the family*, Vol. 1, ed. by Wesley R. Burr. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Lewis, Robert. 1997. *Raising a modern-day knight: a Father's role in guiding his son to authentic manhood*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. *Real family values: leading your family into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with clarity and conviction*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers.
- Locke, H. and K. Wallace. 1959. Short marital adjustment and prediction tests: their reliability and validity. *Marriage and Family Living* 21: 251-55.
- Loder, James. 1998. *The logic of the spirit: Human development in theological perspective*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Luft, Joseph. 1984. *Group processes*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. San Francisco, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.
- MacDonald, James. 2002. *Seven words to change your family ... while there's still time*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

- Marcellino, Jerry. 1996. *Rediscovering the lost treasure of family worship*. Laurel, MS: Audubon Press.
- Markman, Stanley H., and S. L. Blumberg. 1994. *Fighting for your marriage*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Marsden, George, ed. 1987. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 5, *Evangelical and fundamental Christianity* by M. Eliade. New York, NY: MacMillan.
- Martin, M. W. 1985. Satisfaction with intimate exchange: Gender-role differences and the impact of equity, equality, and rewards. *Sex Roles* 13: 597-605.
- Mass, Robin. 2000. Christ as the logos of childhood: Reflections on the meaning and mission of the child. *Theology Today* 56 (4): 464.
- Mathis, Richard D., and Zoe Tanner. 1991. Cohesion, adaptability, and satisfaction of family systems in later life. *Family Therapy* 18: 47-60.
- McGrath, K. Taylor, and D. Kamen. 2004. Storytelling: Enhancing language acquisition in young children. *Education* 46: 125.
- McGrath, Tom. 2000. From generation to generation: How to pass on the articles of faith. *U.S. Catholic* 65 (6): 12-17.
- Medling, James M., Michael McCarrey. 1981. Marital adjustment over segments of the family life cycle: The issue of spouses' value similarity. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 43 (1): 195-203.
- Merton, Robert K., and Robert A. Nisbet, eds. 1961. Family disorganization in *Contemporary Social Problems* by William J. Goode. New York, NY: Harcourt and Brace.
- Miller, Betty. 1998. *Neither male nor female*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Miller, Betty, and D. Sollie. 1980. Normal stresses during the transition to parenthood. *Family Relations*, 29: 459-65.
- Minuchin, S. 1974. *Families and family therapy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Merves-Okin, L.A. 1982. *Analysis of intimacy in marital dyads*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Phoenix, AZ: Temple University.
- Meyerowitz, J. H., and H. Feldman. 1966. Transition to parenthood. *Psychiatric Research Report* 20: 78-84.

- Morganthaler, S.K., and N.A. Lass. 2000. Two miracles together: The brain and faith development. *Lutheran Education* 136 (2): 87-93.
- Mowrer, E. R. 1941. Recent trends in family research. *American Sociological Review* 6: 510.
- Murphy, S. 2003. Sharing time goes awry . . . or does it? *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 17: 218.
- Musleah, Rahel. 2000. *Why on this night?* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers.
- Napier, A. 1978. The rejection-intrusion pattern: A central family dynamic. *The Journal of Marriage and Family Counseling* 4 (1): 5-12.
- Neifert, M. 2000. Ways to nurture faith, hope, and love. *Journal on Parenting* 13 (10): 121-123.
- Nock, Steven L. 1979. The family life cycle: Empirical or conceptual tool? *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 41: 15-26.
- Norton, Arthur J. 1980. The influence of divorce on traditional life cycle measures. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 42: 63-69.
- Norton, R. 1983. Measuring marital quality: A critical look at the dependent variable. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 45: 141-51.
- Nyland, Albert. 1999. *Involuntary childlessness and marital satisfaction and adjustment*. A dissertation from the University of Southern California.
- Olson, D. 1972. Empirically unbinding the double bind: Review of research and conceptual reformulations. *Family Process* 11: 69-94.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. Commentary: Three-dimensional (3-D) circumplex model and revised scoring of FACES III. *Family Process* 30: 74-79.
- Olson, D., H. McCubbin, H. Barnes, A. Larsen, M. Muxen, and M. Wilson. 1983. *Families: What makes them work*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Olson, D., C. Russell, and D. Sprenkle. 1979. Circumplex model of marital and family systems I: Cohesion and adaptability dimensions, family types, and clinical applications. *Family Process* 18 (April): 3-28.
- Olson, D., Joyce Portner, and Yoav Lavee. 1985. *FACES III*. St. Paul, MN: Life Innovations.

- Orden, S. R., and N. M. Bradburn. 1969. Working wives and marriage happiness. *American Journal of Sociology* 73: 715-31.
- Ortega, S. T., H. P. Whitt, and J. A. William. 1988. Religious homogamy and marital happiness. *Journal of Family Issues* 9: 224-39.
- Osmer, Richard R. 2000. The Christian education of children in the protestant tradition. *Theology Today* 56 (4): 506-23.
- Oxford, J., E. Oppenheimer, S. Egert, C. Hensman, and S. Guthrie. 1976. The cohesiveness of alcoholism complicated marriages and its influence on treatment outcome. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 128: 318-39.
- Palmer, Parker. 1998. *The courage to teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Paris, B. L., and E. B. Paris. 1966. A longitudinal study in marital satisfaction. *Sociological and Social Research* 50: 212-22.
- Paterson, K. 2001. The spiritual reading life of children. *U.S. Catholic* 66 (24): 17-25.
- Pazmino, Robert W. 2001. *God our teacher: Theological basics in Christian education*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Philips, M. 1981. *Building respect, responsibility, and spiritual values in your child*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers.
- Peterson, Michael L. 2002. *Philosophy of education*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Rankin, Donna. 1981. *Marital Adjustment of couples with zero, one or two children*. A dissertation from Rush University, College of Nursing.
- Ratcliff, Donald. 2004. "Biblical Perspectives on Children's Spirituality", Chapter 4, in *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, by Klaus Issler. Eugene, OR: Cascade/Wipf & Stock.
- Reiss, D. Varieties of consensual experience I: A theory for relating family interaction to individual thinking. *Family Process* 10: 1-27.
- Roberts, William L. 1979. Significant elements in the relationship of long-married couples. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 10 (3): 265-71.
- Rogers, Eugene F., Jr. 2004. Sanctified unions: An argument for gay marriage. *Christian Century* 121 (12): 26.

- Rogers, Stacy J., and Lynn K. White. 1998. Satisfaction with parenting: The role of marital happiness, family structure, and parents' gender. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60: 293-308.
- Rollins, B. C. and K. L. Cannon. 1974. Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle: A reevaluation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 36: 271-82.
- Rossi, Alice S. 1987. *Parenthood in transition: From lineage to child to self-orientation* in Parenting across the life span. Hawthorne, New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Rubin, Lillian B. 1983. *Intimate strangers: Men and women together*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Rubio, Julie H. 2002. The dual vocation of Christian parents. *Theological Studies* 63 (4): 786-812.
- Ryder, R. 1973. Longitudinal data relating marital satisfaction and having a child. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (35): 604-06.
- Ryrie, Charles C. 1999. *Basic theology*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.
- Sabbetelli, R. M. 1988. Measurement issues in marital research: A review and critique of contemporary survey instruments. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 50: 891-915.
- Sande, Ken, and Tom Raabe. 2002. *Peacemaking for families: A biblical guide to managing conflict in your home*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
- Scott, Daniel G. 2004. Retrospective spiritual narratives: Exploring recalled childhood and adolescent spiritual experiences. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 9 (1): 67-79.
- Self, Carolyn S., and William L. Self. 1981. *A survival kit for marriage*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.
- Shapiro, A., and J. Gottman, and S. Carrere. 2000. The baby and the marriage: Identifying factors that buffer against decline in marital satisfaction after the first baby arrives. *Journal of Family Psychology* 14 (1): 59-70.
- Shaw, S.M. 1999. Storytelling in religious education. *Religious Enunciation Press* 32: 12-14.
- Sibley, Linda Kondracki. 2004. When families fall apart: Practical ways to minister to the youngest victims—children. *Children's Ministry* 8: 65.

- Simon, Fritz B., Helm Stierlin, and Lyman C. Wynne. 1985. *The language of family therapy*. New York, NY: Family Process Press.
- Smalley, Gary. 2004. *The blended family*. Colorado Springs, CO: Gospel Light.
- Spanier, Graham. 1973. Whose marital adjustment: A research note. *Sociological Inquiry* 43: 95-96.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1976. Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (38): 15-28.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988. Assessing the strengths of the dyadic adjustment scale. *Journal of Family Psychology* 2: 92-94.
- Spanier, Graham and Charles Cole. 1976. Toward clarification and investigation of marital adjustment. *International Journal of Sociology* 6 (Spring): 121-46.
- Spanier, Graham, and R. Lewis. 1980. Marital quality: A review of the seventies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 42: 825-37.
- Spanier, Graham, R. Lewis, and C. Cole. 1975. Marital adjustment over the family life cycle: The issue of curvilinearity. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 37: 263-75.
- Speer, David C. 1979. Family systems: Morphostasis and morphogenesis, or is homeostasis enough? *Family Process* 9: 259-78.
- Sporakowski, Michael J., and George A. Hughston. 1978. Prescriptions for happy marriage: Adjustments and satisfactions of couples married for 50 or more years. *Family Coordinator* 27: 321-27.
- Steinberg, L., and S. B. Silverberg. 1987. Influences on marital satisfaction during middle stages of the family life cycle. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 49: 751-60.
- Stonehouse, Catherine. 1998. *Joining children on the spiritual journey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Strauss, M. A., and B. W. Brown. 1978. *Family measurement techniques*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Sweatman, Stephen M. 1995. *Marital satisfaction, cross-cultural adjustment stress and the psychological sequelae*. La Mirada, CA: Biola University.
- Swenson, Clifford H., Ron W. Eskew, and Karen A. Kohlhepp. 1981. Stage of the family life cycle, ego development, and the marriage relationship. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 43 (November): 841.

- Swindoll, Charles R. 1991. *The strong family*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Talbert, B.W. 2000. Partners with listening hearts: Some thoughts on Christian formation in families. *Journal of Family Ministry* 14: 20-29.
- Thompson, Norma, ed. 1982. *Religious education and theology*. Birmingham, AL: Education Press.
- Toffler, Alvin. 1970. *Future shock*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Tolbert, La Verne. 2000. *Teaching like Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. The relationship between fatherless children and their concept of the fatherhood of God. *Lutheran Education Journal* 130 (3): 190-210.
- Toon, Peter. 1996. *Our triune God: A biblical portrayal of the trinity*. Wheaton, IL: Victor.
- Tripp, Tedd. 1995. *Shepherding a child's heart*. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press.
- Trent, J.T., R. Osborne, and Bruner, K. eds. 2002. *Parent's guide to the spiritual growth of children: Helping your child develop a personal faith*. Chicago, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Valliant, C., and G. Valliant. 1993. Is the U-curve of marital satisfaction an illusion? A 40-year study of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55: 230-39.
- VanLaningham, Jody, David R. Johnson, and Paul Amato. 2001. Marital happiness, marital duration, and the U-shaped curve: Evidence from a five-wave panel study. *Social Forces* 78 (4): 1313-41.
- Vincent, C. E. 1966. Familia spongia: The adaptive function. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 28: 29-36.
- Wallace, Catherine M. 1999. Storytelling, doctrine and spiritual formation. *Anglican Theological Review*, 81 (39).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2005. Kids these days: The changing state of childhood. *Christian Century* 122 (6): 26.
- Wertheim, E. 1973. Family unit therapy and the science and typology of family systems. *Family Systems* 12: 361-376.
- Westerhoff, John H. III. 2000. *Will our children have faith?* Toronto, ON: Morehouse Publishers.

- White, L., and J. Edwards. 1990. Emptying the nest and the parental well-being: Evidence from national panel data. *American Sociological Review* 55: 235-42.
- Wilhoit, Jim. 1986. *Christian education and the search for meaning*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Willard, Dallas. 1997. *The divine conspiracy*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Wilson, M., and E. Filsinger. 1986. Religiosity and marital adjustment: Multidimensional interrelationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 48: 147-51.
- Wynne, L. C., I. J. Ryckoff, J. Day, and S. Hirsch. 1958. Pseudomutuality in the family relations of schizophrenics. *Psychiatry* 21: 205-22.
- Yalom, I. 1970. *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: NY: Basic Books.
- Yoder, G. G. 1959. *The nurture and evangelism of children*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Yount, W. 1996. *Created to learn*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Yust, Karen Marie. 2004. Real kids, real faith: Practices for nurturing children's spiritual lives. *The Christian Century* 121 (14): 33-35.
- Zuck, Robert. 1996. *Precious in His sight: Childhood and children in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

## ABSTRACT

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARITAL SATISFACTION AND FAMILY COHESION AMONG EVANGELICALS

Michelle Van Groningen Anthony, Ed.D.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007  
Chairperson: Dr. Larry Purcell

This dissertation examines the relationship between marital satisfaction and family cohesion across three family life spans among evangelicals. Chapter 1 defines the factors involved when studying the social sciences of marriage, parenting, cohesion and adaptability, and family life cycles. Attention is also given to historical research, trends, recent contributions, and theological insights that apply to the aforementioned subjects.

Chapter 2 sets a biblical and theological foundation and thereby acts as a guide for defining values and focus for the precedent literature. Specifically, this chapter analyzes the contributions in the fields of marriage, child-rearing, and family development from a social historical perspective.

Chapter 3 examines the methodological design for this body of research through four guiding research questions. In addition, the formulations of procedures for gathering research are identified in great detail.

Chapter 4 describes the research findings and offers the statistical analysis to show significance in relationships between a number of dependent and independent variables that constitute the marriage and family paradigm. Research questions are

interpreted in light of the statistical information and reports are given through tables and figures to display relevant findings.

Chapter 5 interprets the data in a conclusive manner. It explains what the significant findings represent for marital satisfaction and the relationship this has with family cohesion, family adaptability, and on the family life cycle. Findings are then applied to a specific ministry setting. For those interested in the fields of education or Christian education, this chapter explores issues related to this study, from which the reader may benefit from further research.

Key Words: marriage, adaptability, cohesion, satisfaction, evangelical, family, life cycle, marital happiness, and marital satisfaction.

## VITA

Michelle Van Groningen Anthony

### PERSONAL

Born: March 3, 1967, San Jose, California  
Parents: Ronald and Verna Van Groningen  
Married: Michael Jerome Anthony, June 18, 1988

### EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, Valley Christian High School, San Jose, California  
B.A., Biola University, La Mirada, California, 1989  
M.A., Talbot Theological Seminary, La Mirada, California, 2001

### MINISTERIAL

Director of High School Ministries, Woodbridge Church, 1986-88  
Director of Children Ministries, Woodbridge Church, 1993-99  
Pastor of Children Ministries, Coast Hills Church, 1999-2002  
Pastor of Children and Student Ministries, Coast Hills Church, 2002-04  
Director of Family Ministries, Rock Harbor Church, 2005-Present

### ACADEMIC

Adjunct Faculty of Christian Education, Biola University, 2002-05  
Asst. Professor of Christian Education, Biola University, 2005- Present

### ORGANIZATIONAL

National Association of Professors of Christian Education  
Evangelical Teachers Training Association  
Children's Ministries Training Association