

CONDITIONAL INFLUENCES ON CHILDREN
AND THE QUALITY OF FAMILY LIFE,

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

In the past, investigations of the parent-child relationship have been primarily focused toward examining how different parenting practices affect the developing child. The manner in which a child affects the family unit has, until recently, received little inquiry by social scientists. Walters and Stinnett (1971:98) noted this discrepancy almost a decade ago when they wrote, "Research in parent-child relationships has emphasized the effects of parental attitudes and child bearing practices upon children while, in comparison, the effects of children upon parents has been relatively ignored." The basis of this empirical oversight may be due to what Max Lerner has referred to as the "cult of the child" in the U.S. (1959:60). Irrespective of the reason for this neglect, it does appear that researchers are now beginning to investigate the reciprocal nature of parent-child relationships (Rollins & Galligan, 1978).

The study of this reciprocal relationship is most common in the area of marital satisfaction. Numerous studies have sought to determine the impact of children on the marital dyad (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Feldman, 1971; Figley, 1973; Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Hobbs & Cole, 1976; Rollins & Cannon, 1974). While studies investigating the impact of children

on marital happiness have proliferated, little has been done to investigate how a child or numerous children affect the dynamics of the larger family system. For example, family life quality (a domain conceptually similar to marital satisfaction) is a construct designed to measure how satisfied an individual is with his or her family relations; at present, no research could be found which has attempted to determine the relative impact of children on family dynamics as measured by a family life construct. The purpose of this inquiry is to examine the relationship between number of children and the subjective quality of family life. More specifically, this investigation seeks to determine if specific situational factors influence the manner in which number of children affect family life quality. Situational factors examined were: congruence between ideal number of children and actual number of children, and secondly, expressed differences in family life quality by sex given similar conditional influences.

Definition of Terms

For this study, Family Life Quality, referred to the satisfaction an individual derives from family related activities and relationships. However, it may be stated that the probable social and psychological factors which underlie and determine the quality of family life have yet to be completely identified and delineated. Furthermore, conceptual ambiguities leave the term "family life" susceptible to

personal interpretation. For example, when asked to contemplate family life satisfaction, a respondent may visualize personal relationships with family members, or possibly reflect upon interaction, communication and dependency within the family unit.

Also, responses may differ as a function of age. A young person may think of parents and siblings when asked to reflect on family life satisfaction; whereas the same individual, years later, may focus upon spouse and children (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976:336). Family life quality presents some difficulties of definition but it clearly includes components of life experience which are essential to a general understanding of quality of life (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976).

As noted, perceived family life quality is not an easy domain to operationally define; a concise definition has yet to be established in the literature. For this study, family life quality represented the degree to which an individual was satisfied with personal family relations; this evaluation is based upon an internalized ideal of what family life should be about.

In the literature, the term "family life quality" has been used synonymously with the term "family life satisfaction." Both have represented perceived gratification of family relations, and both have been used interchangeably in discussing results from similar instruments. Therefore,

in an effort to avoid monotony and redundancy, these terms will be used interchangeably for the remainder of this treatise.

Rationale for Variable Selection

Family life satisfaction has, until only recently, received very little attention from students of the family. Current literature on the subject is elemental comparative to other areas of family study. The absence of previous research has afforded investigators little ground on which to build research strategies (Mancini, 1979). Furthermore, what little research has been done, has only partially succeeded in accounting for underlying factors which contribute to family life satisfaction (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976).

Since very little research has been undertaken to investigate family life quality, especially with regard to children, variables which may be useful in interpreting this relationship have yet to be identified. Consideration was given to extrapolating potential variables from other similar areas found in family studies literature. Initially, the domain of family life satisfaction appeared to be a good literature source from which variables might be drawn. However, upon closer examination, it was determined that variables found in life satisfaction literature were too general and did not lend themselves readily to the purpose of this investigation.

Another area, that concerning marriage satisfaction,

does appear to be a body of literature structurally comparable to the domain under investigation. Family life quality and marital satisfaction may be directly related; Rollins and Galligan wrote that marital satisfaction is a "reflection of the quality of the family relationship" (1978:73). These same authors suggest that "one approach to the evaluation of quality in families is to measure marital satisfaction" (Rollins & Galligan, 1978:77). Also, Campbell, Converse and Rodgers, as a result of their findings, suggest that most adults assume family life implied a relationship with a spouse (and in most cases, children) (1976:339). Thus, if most adults respond to the idea of family life quality as a marital factor, then marriage satisfaction and family life quality may be inextricably related. It appears, therefore, justifiable to extrapolate and when need be, generalize from the marriage satisfaction research to the domain of family life quality.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Family Life Quality

As previously mentioned in the definition of this term, the domain of "family life quality" is difficult to grasp both methodologically as well as conceptually (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976). However, the similarity of results in this area would indicate that most respondents conceptualize this domain in a like manner. That is, respondents seem to interpret the concept the same across various instruments, resulting in similar and consistent findings. Studies relating family life quality to overall life satisfaction and marital satisfaction have been found to be most consistent.

Consider as an illustration Sears' (1977) study investigating potential sources of life satisfaction among the Terman gifted men. Sears, upon completion of this study involving 486 older men, concluded that family life satisfaction was the most salient source of overall satisfaction. Of the other sources such as occupation, total service to society, and joy in living, only occupation approached the level of satisfaction derived from family life. Similarly, Medley (1976) found satisfaction with family to be a primary predictor of life satisfaction among the elderly. Using data collected from a national probability sample, Medley was able to obtain a sample of 301 persons 65 years old and older.

Using path analysis to determine the relative impact of several satisfaction domains upon satisfaction with life, Medley (1976), concluded that family life satisfaction made the greatest single impact on life satisfaction.

Similar empirical relationships have been reported in middle-aged samples (Griffin & Mancini, 1979). In an unpublished correlational study, Griffin and Mancini (1979) reported that among mature adults (45-64 years old), family life satisfaction is a primary predictor of global life satisfaction. This was true for both males and females. This relationship was found in the mature age group only, i.e., for those adults from 18-44 and 65 plus, family life quality was not identified as a primary predictor of life satisfaction.

Similar findings were reported by Haavio-Mannila (1971) in her Finnish study. Haavio-Mannila (1971:589) concluded that the family was "a more important determiner of general happiness than work or leisure." Finnish working wives reported family life satisfaction as more important to overall life satisfaction than their marital relationship; conversely, non-working wives viewed the dyadic relationship just as important as family life in general. Among married respondents, husbands and wives reported no difference in family life satisfaction. However, upon examining sex differences among the 442 subjects, Haavio-Mannila (1971) reported that urban women reported lower satisfaction with family than did

men. This was thought to reflect the large proportion of unmarried women in the sample. Likewise, considering all categorical groupings, unmarried men in her sample reported the least amount of family life satisfaction.

Haavio-Mannila (1971) also reported a correlational relationship between family life quality and social class. It was concluded that among married men, work satisfaction paralleled that of family life, and both were directly related to social class, e.g., the lower the class the lower the family life satisfaction scores. However, among Finnish wives, satisfaction with family life increased as social status decreased. Thus, it appeared that social strata may affect the relationship between family life quality and satisfaction with life. It may be that men in the lower social classes find their often menial occupations unrewarding, both personally and financially. Under these conditions, the worker may consider the family a contributor to this situation because all the money made goes toward supporting the family with little left for personal enjoyment. Conversely, the lower class wife may view the family as one of the few sources of gratification and pride available to her.

In other studies, Andrews and Withey (1973;1974) found the variable "family life" accounting for a significant proportion of the variance in overall quality of life. A cluster of 12 variable items were found to account for over half of the variance in perceived quality of life. Of these,

one was a score indicative of quality of family activities, and another, a Family Index Score, was reflective of reported satisfaction with spouse, marriage and children. Likewise, Hoffman and Manis (1978) found "Having a happy family" the most important factor in the lives of parents. A large sample of parents were given a list and were asked which things on the list were most important to them; almost 39% of the women and 34% of the men chose family happiness as the major factor in their life. The second most commonly chosen item was "being close to your spouse." The occurrence of these two items being the most frequently chosen may reflect the thought that respondents tend to perceive these domains as being similar.

Support for this contention can be found in Mancini's (1978) correlational study on family life satisfaction. He reported a moderate correlation between marital satisfaction and satisfaction with family life. Correlational magnitudes for the wives, with regard to marital satisfaction and family life quality, were higher than those reported for the husbands; they were $r=.45$ and $r=.33$, respectively. Campbell et al., reported almost identical findings in their 1976 study. Using an index score designed to assess "the degree of understanding and companionship with the spouse," the authors found a significant correlation ($r=.45$) with family life satisfaction. That is to say, perception of interspousal companionship and communication was positively related to

perceived family life quality. Thus, results appear supportive of the contention made by Campbell et al. (1976: 339) that most adults assume family life implies a relationship with a spouse.

Family Life Quality as Affected by Children

Two articles have viewed family life satisfaction as influenced by number of children. Both Campbell et al., (1976) and Mancini (1978) found this relationship to be a non-significant one. Mancini (1978) reported a slightly negative correlation between family life satisfaction and number of children. This was consistent for both husbands and wives. Campbell et al. (1976) reported a beta coefficient of only .05 for number of children at home. The variable, number of children, had one of the lowest beta scores among the personal characteristics category. Both articles suggest that the number of children has little influence on satisfaction with family life quality.

Nevertheless, Bubolz (1977) reported that children did have an impact on family life satisfaction. While not looking at number of children per se, she reported that having dependent children at home correlated with higher family life satisfaction scores. Among the 52 couples in the Bubolz (1977) study, those living alone reported the lowest family life satisfaction scores. Scores for those couples whose children had left home fell in between the two groups. Thus, family life quality was higher among those couples with

dependent children when compared to couples whose children had moved from the home. Also, both groups reported higher scores than did couples who had had no children.

While Campbell et al. (1976) did not find a significant correlation between number of children and satisfaction, they concluded that children do affect family life quality. The authors reported modest correlation ($r=.31$) between family life satisfaction and perceived relationship with one's children. In other words, the parent's negative assessment of the parent-child relationship correlated with the parent expressing family life dissatisfaction. Thus, it does appear that children affect one's perception of family life quality. In sum, present research indicates that while number of children is unimportant, family life quality decreases with the absence of children. Family life satisfaction also decreases if the quality of the relationship between parent and child is poor.

Recapitulation of Family Size Research

In summary, the published research relative to family life satisfaction, while not extensive, is consistent; perceived family life quality greatly influences reported global psychological well being. Also, marital satisfaction appeared to be closely akin to family life quality. The relationship between these variables and family life quality is well documented. These relationships appear generally unaffected by demographic factors, e.g., sex, nationality;

still Haavio-Mannila (1971) reported that social class may influence the relationship between satisfaction with family life and overall life satisfaction.

The data on the effects of children appears consistent. While relationships with and presence of children are important, number appears to be a less vital factor, i.e., the number of children in a household doesn't influence family life quality. However, since only two studies have looked at this relationship in terms of fertility rates, an investigation manipulating potential influencing variables in conjunction with fertility rates appears justifiable.

Marital Satisfaction Literature

The brevity of the previous section on quality of family life gives testimony to the limited research on the topic. This meager research results in a small pool of variables pertinent for consideration in this inquiry. Marital satisfaction, however, does appear to be an area noteworthy of consideration (see Rationale, pp.4-5). Furthermore, the quantity of marital satisfaction data is such that potential variables may be readily available for consideration. Thus the remaining literature review will focus on areas of marital satisfaction literature which have relevancy to this inquiry.

Marital Satisfaction and Child Spacing

The concept of child spacing as an investigative variable can be defined as "a fixed number indicating the interval

between marriage and the birth of the first child and subsequent births" (Figley, 1973). The majority of empirical knowledge in this area has been compiled by Harold T. Christensen and colleagues. Through the use of thousands of subjects from Denmark and the United States, Christensen et al. have completed five studies which investigate numerous child spacing concepts (Christensen & Philbrick, 1952; Christensen, 1953; Christensen & Bowden, 1953; Christensen & Meissner, 1953; Christensen, 1963a; Christensen, 1963b).

In reviewing the work of Christensen et al., Figley (1973: 274-275) summarized Christensen's findings into five areas, all of which may have relevance to the research under investigation. They were:

1. Overall spacing intervals varied directly with the order, that is, the interval between births increased with each successful birth.
2. Similarly, spacing intervals varied inversely with the number of births, that is, intervals between births were shorter in families with fewer children.
3. Early marriage and early parenthood (close spacings) were found most often to occur together.
4. Early parenthood (close spacing) was found to be disproportionately high among non-religious and lower socioeconomic groups.
5. Premarital as well as early postmarital conception was found to be associated with higher divorce rates.

With regard to child spacing and marital satisfaction, Christensen (1968:287) formulated the "value-behavior

discrepancy" hypothesis, i.e., he noted that "continuing research is likely to reveal that it is not either values (desired children) or behavior (children actually born) considered alone that are crucial variables affecting marriage, but rather the value-behavior discrepancy which leaves married couples in varying states of harmony or dissonance." In substantiating his contention, Christensen referred to an earlier study (Christensen & Philbrick, 1952) in which the authors found a relationship between lower marital adjustment scores and couples who: (a) had unplanned children, (b) would have fewer children if it were possible to do over again, and (c) reported that parenthood interfered with marital satisfaction.

Similarly, Reed (1948) concluded that a positive linear relationship exists between marital adjustment and the ability of couples to maintain congruence between actual birth rate and desired progeny. Thus, data from the Indianapolis Fertility Study (860 couples) conducted by Reed (1948) supported the findings reported by Christensen and Philbrick (1952). Furthermore, Reed's (1948) study failed to find any kind of relationship between marital adjustment and the ability to space progeny according to the couple's desires. From this data it appeared that neither child spacing nor number of children directly affected marital satisfaction.

These studies indicated that child spacing as a

manipulative variable, may not be a valid predictor of marital satisfaction. Interpretation as such may be erroneous due to the various underlying factors previously mentioned, that is, child spacing in and of itself does not affect marital adjustment; but, rather, it is the congruence between marital desires and actual behavior with regard to fertility. Moreover, Christensen (1968), and supporting evidence (Christensen & Philbrick, 1952; Reed, 1948) suggest that as "value-behavior discrepancy" decreases, marital adjustment will increase.

Child Density and Marital Satisfaction

Child density is a demographic term representing a density ratio found by computing number of children in the home divided by the years married. It has been hypothesized that with all the demands of parenthood (e.g., the psychological, economic and physical demands), the "the higher the ratio of children per years of marriage, the less generally satisfactory the marital experience would be" (Hurley & Palonen, 1967). However, little research exists which supports this contention.

Only a few studies have investigated the relationship between marital satisfaction and child density (Rollins & Galligan, 1978). In the first major study on this topic, Hurley and Palonen (1967) found a significant negative relationship between child density and marital satisfaction. Their sample consisted of 40 married student couples; all

were relatively young (mean age = 27 years), and each in the initial stages of marriage (mean = 6 years). A marital satisfaction score was obtained by combining the scores from two marital adjustment instruments: Locke-Wallace Short Marital Adjustment Scale (Locke & Wallace, 1959) and the van der Veer Family Concept measure (van der Veer et al., 1964); Figley (1973) took issue with Hurley and Palonen's usage of adjustment measures after they referred to them as measures of marital satisfaction. Correlational statistics between their marital satisfaction score and number of children, years married, and child density of each couple were computed. No significant relationship ($p=.05$) was found between the dependent variable and either number of children ($r=.21$) or years married ($r=.19$). However, the authors did report a significant negative correlation ($r=-.39$) between marital satisfaction and child density.

It can be concluded from these results that neither number of children nor years married directly reduce marital satisfaction. Rather it would appear to be a combination of these factors, more specifically, as the ratio between number of children and number of years married increase, the lower reported marital satisfaction.

Later, Figley (1973:276) attempted to partially replicate the Hurley-Palonen study using a "larger and more heterogeneous sample and alternate instrument to measure marital conflict in addition to marital adjustment to monitor the

marital state more accurately." His sample consisted of 46 middle-aged couples, predominately Protestant and married at least 10 years. Two aspects of the marital relationship were investigated: marital satisfaction, and marital communication.

In the replication study, Figley (1973) failed to substantiate the Hurley-Palonen (1967) finding. As a result, Figley (1973:280) concluded that the study provided substantial evidence "that no significant relationship exists between child density and two measures of the marital relationship: marital communication and marital adjustment." More recently, Miller (1975) also failed to find a relationship between marital satisfaction and child density. Thus, when this relationship was investigated using samples more representative of the general population, as did Figley (1973) and Miller (1975), results indicated child density to be a poor indicator of marital satisfaction.

Transition to Parenthood and Marital Satisfaction

Introduction of a first child into a marital dyad has a psychological affect on the new parents (Christensen, 1968; Dyer, 1963; Feldman, 1971; Feldman & Rogoff, 1968; Hobbs, 1965; LeMasters, 1957; Luckey & Bain, 1970; Meyero-witz & Feldman, 1966; Rossi, 1968; Russell, 1974; Ryder, 1973). Within this area however, inconsistent results made interpretation less than unanimous among researchers concerned with the topic. Early research tended to report

primipara (birth of the first child) as a crisis event, but more recent research would indicate this event to be a period of mildly stressful transition.

Consider as an illustration LeMasters' study in 1957. In this study LeMasters interviewed first-time parents using an unstructured interview technique. All 46 couples interviewed have several characteristics in common. They were young (between 25 and 35 years of age), middle class, urban or suburban residents, and had experienced primipara within five years of the interview date.

LeMasters (1957) reported 83% of the couples found initial parenthood a period of "extensive" or "severe crisis." Furthermore, LeMasters concluded that the data appeared to support the contention that crisis occurred irrespective of the quality of the marriage.

Similarly, Dyer (1963) attempted to study the crisis that a first child precipitates. Dyer's sample was similar to LeMasters' study insofar as the couples were young and predominately middle class. Also, both used small non-random samples. However, instead of using unstructured interviews, Dyer used a Likert-type questionnaire to ascertain the impact of the first child.

Dyer found results similar to those of LeMasters (1957). Most notably, were the findings with regard to the amount of crisis experienced following the birth of a first child; 50% of the couples tested reported "extensive" or "severe" crisis.

He also concluded that the lack of planning of the pregnancy and subsequent parenthood was a common factor among those couples experiencing extensive crisis. Conversely, LeMasters (1957) noted that unplanned pregnancy was not a major etiological factor with regard to crisis in his sample.

Similarly, Feldman and colleagues (1968, 1971) were able to obtain data on the marital relationship of primipara couples. Using a short term longitudinal study, Feldman et al. (1968, 1971), gathered their data on the couples early in the pregnancy and after the first child was born. In reviewing the work of Feldman et al., Rollins and Galligan (1978:78) expressed what they felt to be the two major conclusions that can be drawn from the work of Feldman et al.: (1) "there was evidence of postpartum decrements in general marital satisfaction, and (2) these decrements were more likely to occur for those couples which had the highest marital satisfaction before the child arrived."

This latter conclusion seems contrary to the intuitive idea that adding a child to a bad marriage will only make the marriage worse. Rollins and Galligan (1978) explain this phenomenon as an artifact of the measurement used, i.e., only those with the initial high marital satisfaction scores had very far to drop, thus the data had a "basement effect." Reported decrease among those with initial high scores was simply a regression toward the mean. This explanation is supported by data collected in a similar longitudinal study

(Ryder, 1973). Ryder (1973) was better able to interpret this spurious effect through the use of a control group. Ryder concluded that no difference in general marital satisfaction was found between those couples who had a child and those who did not.

However, wives who had a child showed a greater decrease in satisfaction with companionship than non-postpartum females. This was true for the new mother regardless of prepartum marital satisfaction scores. Intrusion of the first child into the marital dyad changes the wife's attitude toward marital companionship; either postpartum wives perceive less companionship, or the desire for spousal companionship increases and is not met (Ryder, 1973).

Not all data indicate that the transition to parenthood is particularly stressful or negative. Hobbs (1965) reported results contrary to the works of LeMasters (1957) and Dyer (1963). From a random sample of 53 white, urban couples, Hobbs (1965) reported no incidence of "extensive" or "severe crisis" among the sampled couples. Using a 23-item check list with a higher validity rating than the instruments used by LeMasters (1957) and Dyer (1963), Hobbs stated that 87% of the couples reported experiencing "slight" crisis during the initial parenthood phase.

Furthermore, similar to Ryder (1973), Hobbs (1965) reported mothers experienced more difficulty during this period than fathers. Unlike some of the mothers, the majority of

fathers reported their marriages as being happier and more satisfying than before the birth of their first child. Hobbs (1968) replicated his 1965 study and obtained very similar results. More recently, Hobbs and Wimbish (1977), reported a study by Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier (1975) in which the authors attempted to investigate some causal hypotheses with regard to transition to parenthood. Data were obtained from 54 primiparous couples by both interviews and questionnaire. Using path analysis to determine which factors had the greatest impact on the transition to parenthood, the authors found sex of the Ss had the greatest effect on the transition. More specifically, females were reported to have experienced more difficulty with the transition than males. These results support the claim by Hobbs (1965, 1968) that females experience greater difficulty with the transition than do males.

Another study undertaken to ascertain the effects of primipara on the marital relationship was that of Meyerowitz and Feldman (1966). Using 400 primiparous couples, Meyerowitz and Feldman interviewed these couples five months prior to birth, five weeks after birth, and five months after birth. The couples expressed having a more positive relationship prior to the pregnancy than during it. At five months after the birth of the child, the couples reported greater marital satisfaction than during the pre-pregnancy period. Meyerowitz and Feldman (1966) reported a high level

of interspousal agreement that marital satisfaction had increased as a result of becoming parents. These authors concluded that the first child and subsequent adjustment, was a "significant transitional point in the maturation of the marital relationship-transition from the dyadic state to a more rewarding triadic system" (1966:83). Numerous other studies give support to the thought that parenthood may not be the "crisis" period described by LeMasters, but rather a period of mildly stressful transition (Beauchamp, 1968; Hobbs & Cole, 1976; Hobbs & Wimbish, 1977; Russell, 1974; Uhlenberg, 1970).

Thus it appears that the arrival of a child does have an impact on the marital relationship. However, the severity of the impact, while not being conclusive, appears to be less "extensive" than reported in earlier studies. In regard to sex differences, males appear less likely to view the transition period negatively. Conversely, wives report slightly lower positive attitudes toward the primipara period than husbands. Also, wives express greater dissatisfaction with postpartum spousal companionship.

Family Size and Marital Satisfaction

The research involving marital satisfaction as influenced by family size has led to the publication of a plethora of studies. The relationship between these two factors is a complex one (Burgess & Cottrell, 1939; Terman, 1938). For example, in their study of 100 large families, Bossard and

Boll (1956) noted that, relative to small families, large family parents had greater role specialization, and were less egalitarian. Bossard and Boll (1956) also noted that among large family parents, there appeared a great propensity for poor marital communication. Conversely, Frederick Campbell (1970) reported that with an increase in number of children, the role specializations of the parents break down. He stated that the wife becomes involved in more domestic decisions. The results of these particular studies are not atypical in that polar findings were reported. Therefore, in an effort to unify and survey these numerous studies in a meaningful manner, the topic will be reviewed according to the measurement concept used.

For example, interspousal affect has been used to help determine the impact of family size on marital satisfaction. In Nye, Carlson and Garrett's (1970) synoptic overview of the literature dealing with family size, they examined the relationship between number of children and interspousal affect. After examining the literature as well as their own data, Nye et al. (1979:220), concluded that "increased family size after two children, and especially after four, show a decline in spousal affect." This is similar to the results reported by Feldman (1971:121). In concluding that multipara brought numerous changes to the marital relationship, he reported "lower satisfaction in marriage, perceived negative personality change in both partners, less

satisfaction with home life, more instrumental conversation, more child centered concern, and lowering of sexual satisfaction after child birth."

Some studies in this area have investigated the relationship by examining various correlates of marital dissatisfaction. For example, Renne (1970) reported a greater propensity for marital dissatisfaction among people currently raising children compared to those couples who had never had children or whose children had left home. This relationship was found regardless of age, income level or race. Campbell, et al. (1976:333) reported almost identical results. They concluded that "older married people and people with few or no children in the household describe their relationship with their spouse more positively than young people or parents of large households." These findings have been supported by Glenn (1975) and Nock (1979).

Another process used to ascertain the influence of children on the marital dyad has been to examine dissolution. Using this method Thornton (1977) found dissolution rates highest for those families with no children, and for those with fairly large families. This relationship was consistent regardless of length of marriage. Somewhat similar results were reported by Nye and Hoffman (1963). Nye and Hoffman concluded that the relationship between family size and marital satisfaction is a curvilinear one, that is, couples with very few children as well as those with a lot of children appear to be less satisfied with their dyadic

relationship.

Another study reported marital satisfaction lowest for those mothers with five or more children and highest for those with three or less (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). Blood and Wolfe also noted that a higher proportion of dissatisfied wives expressed a desire to have fewer children if it were possible to do over again. Similar results were reported by Farber and Blackman (1956). Thus it appears a high number of children may be detrimental to the marital relationship; however, the conclusions on having fewer children are not as consistent.

As can be seen thus far, numerous studies lend support to the contention that presence or number of children are inversely related to marital satisfaction (Burgess & Cottrell, 1939; Christensen & Philbrick, 1952; Reed, 1948). However, another body of literature suggests that there is very little relationship between these two variables (Burgess & Wallin, 1953; Christensen, 1968; Udry, 1974). Terman (1938) concluded from his research that the presence of children may effect any given marriage either way, influence depends upon numerous and often independent factors.

Such a factor, as pointed out repeatedly by Christensen (1968) and others (Reed, 1948; Udry, 1974), is not number of children per se, but rather the amount of congruence between desired number of children and actual number born. For example, Michel and Feyraband (1969) reported that

women, whose fertility output exceeded their desires, expressed greater marital dissatisfaction. This was in comparison to women who gave birth to the number desired, even if the number of children for both groups were the same.

Similarly, other researchers stress that it is not the actual number of children in the family which affect the marital dyad, but rather co-factors which are brought about with increased number of children (Christensen, 1968; Feldman, 1971; Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Thornton, 1977). For example, with larger families comes greater economic responsibilities, less personal time and, of course, less time for dyadic interaction. Thus marital dissatisfaction may be more a function of the factors which accompany the arrival of children, rather than the influence of children themselves.

It should be noted that these two conceptual explanations (value-behavior discrepancy, accumulation of co-factors) may be inextricably related. Stated differently, poor dyadic communication, reduced sexual activity, etc., may be an antecedent to, or consequence of, the incongruence as previously discussed. Thus, these two factors may be reciprocal in relationship and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine which is the predecessor.

Recapitulation of Family Size Research

With literally dozens of studies in the literature on this topic, definitive results have yet to be established.

Among these studies have come reports of "no relationship," some relationship in the positive direction (Bubolz, 1977; Hoffman & Manis, 1978), others a relationship in the negative direction, and still others have ended up with irregular and/or ambiguous generalization" (Christensen, 1968: 228). Frequent empirical inconsistency, with resultant lack of accumulative knowledge, has led one author to state that "there is no reliable relationship between the presence or number of children and marital adjustment" (Udry, 1974).

These inconsistent results may be attributable to a host of factors. Basic differences may lay with the samples used. Varying degrees of heterogeneity between samples would only confound the problem. And of course, different instruments have been used to measure the dependent variable. For example, Thornton's (1977) conclusions were from data collected in the 1970 National Fertility Study (Ryder & Westoff, 1977). Thornton looked at dissolution rates as an indirect measure of marital satisfaction. This can be compared to the research conducted by Glenn and Weaver (1978) on marital happiness. They used a national probability survey which asked a question directly concerning marital satisfaction. Thus, as shown by this example, instruments which supposedly measure similar concepts may be drastically different; and not surprisingly, results often differ.

Also, another possible salient factor in the ambiguous findings typical to this area would undoubtedly be the

various concepts used as the dependent unit of measure. Among the most common terms used to describe the marital relationship are marital "happiness," "adjustment," "satisfaction," and "quality." Does a typical respondent interpret marital "quality," "satisfaction," or "happiness" to mean the same thing? Do some elicit a similar affective response, while others a more romantic one? Research has shown that "happiness and satisfaction are not synonymous and do not relate in precisely the same manner to other variables" (Glenn & Weaver, 1979). And yet, numerous studies attempt to compare the two.

Similarly, at least one study has attempted to equate a demographic measure to what would normally be considered an affective measure. More specifically, Thornton (1977) used dissolution rates as a measurable reflection of marital satisfaction. In doing so, Thornton attempted to equate the predictors of a successful marriage to predictors of the quality of the marital relationship. These underlying factors may be different (Glenn & Weaver, 1978). Consider as an illustration the variable of religiosity:

It would be possible for religiosity to enhance the probability that any one marriage contracted by the person would be successful, but to decrease the probability that at any one time the person would be in a successful marriage. This possibility exists because religiosity seems to be associated with reluctance to terminate unsuccessful marriages (Landis, 1963), and then may tend to prolong any unsuccessful marriage in which the person finds himself (or herself) (Glenn & Weaver, 1978:270).

Similarly, ambiguous findings may result when trying to compare data collected for two obviously different purposes. For example, the Glenn and Weaver (1978) results were obtained using the NORC question on marital happiness. Thornton (1977) used dissolution rates from a national fertility study; both report results with regard to marital quality, yet neither are conceptually comparable. Both may provide important insight on a particular aspect of marital adjustment, but to compare and/or contrast the results from these two distinctively different data sources would be a dubious exercise.

In conclusion, number of children may affect a marital relationship numerous ways; however, given present research, the manifestation of this affect is not clear. Inconsistent and often contradictory results are a consequence of vague research terms, differing sample populations, as well as a host of other factors found in the literature. At this time no definitive results exist with regard to the relationship between presence or number of children and marital happiness.

Rationale and Hypotheses

In reviewing literature pertinent to this inquiry, specific areas of the marital satisfaction literature were reviewed for their potential contribution of variables; some of these variables were directly related to the relationship under investigation, while others only indirectly

so. For example, child spacing and child density, while not directly related, do demonstrate the complex nature of the relationship being examined. Also, concepts such as these offer some insight into possible variables that may be considered for manipulation. Most notably, child spacing literature contains a substantial amount of discussion concerning the "value-behavior discrepancy" concept with regard to couples and fertility rates. With research demonstrating that this factor influences marital satisfaction (Christensen, 1968; Reed, 1948), it may be tenable to generalize to family life satisfaction. With respect to this investigation, it would be beneficial to determine the degree to which the "value-behavior discrepancy" factor influences the relationship between number of children and reported family life quality. Hypotheses developed with regard to the "value-behavior discrepancy" concept were:

- H₁: If ideal number of children exceeds actual, and the discrepancy is expected to remain, Family Life Quality (FLQ) will be lower than for those individuals reporting congruence between actual and ideal.
- H₂: If ideal number of children exceeds actual and expected number of children would eliminate the difference, FLQ will be higher than for those individuals expecting no additional children.
- H₃: If actual number of births exceed ideal number, FLQ will be lower than for those individuals expressing no difference between ideal and actual.

Numerous studies noted that wives often react differently to the effects of parenthood than do husbands. Ryder (1973) reported that wives perceive less spousal companionship after parenthood. Wives also report greater difficulty during the transition to parenthood period (Hobbs, 1965; Ryder, 1973; Steffensmeier & Steffensmeier, 1975). Conversely, husbands report marriages as being happier and more satisfying after the birth of the child (Hobbs, 1965). In a recent article, Glenn and Weaver (1978) investigated a number of possible variables which might affect marital happiness. Analysis by linear correlation and multiple regression revealed two relationships which have a direct impact on marital happiness. Of interest to this present inquiry was the relationship found between presence of young children and marital happiness. It appeared that children under six years of age have a detrimental effect on the marital happiness of women. A possible explanation for this negative relationship was forwarded by Glenn and Weaver (1978); these authors proposed that young children tend to interfere with spousal communication, require time and energy, and reduce opportunity for sexual interaction.

These studies infer that if young children are in the household, women will report greater dissatisfaction with the marital relationship than will men. Research indicated this phenomenon maintains itself from the transition to parenthood period until the child is at least six years of

age. The degree to which this phenomenon generalizes to family life satisfaction is not known. Therefore, the relationship between presence of a single young child and possible differential affect upon the male and female perception of family life satisfaction will be tested by the following hypothesis:

H₄: Female respondents with a child less than six years of age will report lower Family Life Quality than comparable males.

All previous hypotheses have been extrapolated from marital satisfaction literature. As a result of the ambiguous findings in this area, these were the only two concepts ((1) value-behavior discrepancy, (2) females less satisfied than males) which could be definitively investigated relative to this inquiry. Furthermore, hypotheses stated are in the alternative form, however, hypotheses were tested in null form.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Instrument

Data used are from the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), University of Chicago. This inquiry utilized data gathered from 1973 through 1977. Principal investigator during this period was James A. Davis.

The General Social Surveys were conducted during February, March and April of 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, and 1977. During this period a total of 7,507 interviews were completed. Each respondent was interviewed individually and the median length of each interview was approximately one hour. Each survey is an independently drawn sample of English-speaking persons within the continental United States. All respondents were 18 years of age and older, and living in non-institutional arrangements.

Sampling

Surveys were conducted in one of three sampling procedures: block quota sampling, full probability sampling, or a combination of both block quota and full. Block quota sampling was used in 1972, 1973 and 1974, as well as for half of the 1975 and 1976 surveys. Half of 1975 and 1976 surveys were full probability while the entire 1977 survey was full probability.

With block quota, a preselected block or segment (drawn

from Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas) provides respondents for a multi-stage area probability sample. Quotas used to determine sampling are based on sex, age and employment status. At the block level, the quotas require approximately equal numbers of males and females with the exact proportion for each block determined by the 1970 Census tract data. With regard to additional requirements by sex, there must be the proper proportion of men over and under 35 years of age in the location; and for women in the location, there must be the proper proportion of employed and unemployed. Again these quotas are based on 1970 Census data.

After quotas are determined, an interviewer proceeds from the northwest corner of the block in a specified direction until quotas have been filled. This type of sample design is most appropriate when, in the judgement of the project director, the probability of sampling bias is small relative to the sensitivity of the instrument (NORC Cumulative Codebook, 1977).

In 1975 and 1976 half of the sampling probability was full, and in 1977 the entire survey utilized full probability sampling procedures. Full probability sampling can be conceptualized as a narrowing procedure. All selection of geographic areas at successive stages is in accordance with the method of probabilities proportional to size (NORC Cumulative Codebook, 1977). Initially, SMSAs as well as non-metropolitan counties are subdivided into smaller

groupings according to size strata. These sub-groupings are further divided according to geographic location and/or racial characteristics. Further division continues in an effort to equalize population size.

This procedure is essentially replicated until households within blocks are identified. "Thus, the principal NORC national probability sample is, in effect, an inventory of identifiable households, each with a known probability of selection" (NORC Cumulative Codebook, 1977). (For further discussion of the difference between "full" and "block" probability sampling, see Glenn, 1977).

Measurement of Criterion Variable

Family life quality for this study was measured by the following single-item indicator:

"How much satisfaction do you get from your family life--a very great deal, a great deal, quite a bit, a fair amount, some, a little, or none?"

Each respondent was asked which level of satisfaction was most indicative of perceived family life quality. Possible scores ranged from one (no satisfaction) to seven (a very great deal of satisfaction). Appendix A provides a numerical breakdown of responses by year.

Statistical Analysis

Two samples were employed in testing the four hypotheses. Hypotheses I, II and III required using a separate

sample than was used for hypothesis IV. Inclusion in each sample was dependent upon criterion for inclusion in the groups composing the samples. Sample one was composed of four groups used in the testing of hypotheses I, II and III; sample two was composed of two groups used in the testing of hypothesis IV. It was possible for a respondent to be included in both samples, however this did not effect results. Sample one contained 778 respondents and sample two contained 1091.

1. Sample one was divided into four groups according to criterion as established in hypotheses I, II and III. A \bar{X} score for each group as well as an estimate of the population error variance was obtained by performing an analysis of variance one-way classification between the groups. An a priori comparison of these \bar{X} s was then performed by using Dunn's (Bonferroni t) multiple comparison procedure for planned comparisons (Dunn, 1961). This procedure, often referred to as the Dunn-Bonferroni, leads to a shorter confidence interval than do the a posteriori comparisons if the number of comparisons are small. Thus, if the researcher knows in advance that he is interested in making a small number of nonorthogonal comparisons among means, Dunn's a priori procedure may be more powerful than are the common a posteriori comparisons (Kirk, 1968:81).

2. Sample two was composed of two groups of respondents, one male and one female, as specified in hypothesis

IV. A t-test was performed comparing family life satisfaction scores between the groups.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Sample

To facilitate description, the groups were labeled according to their composition as a group. For example, those individuals who reported congruence between ideal and actual number of children were referred to as the "Congruent" group (N=28); other groups were labeled as follows: "Act > Id" represented respondents who have more children than they perceive to be ideal (N=10), "Dif w/Non-Congruence" were those respondents who report having less children than their ideal, and if additional children are expected, the number will not fully remove the discrepancy between ideal and actual (N=161). The fourth group of sample one was referred to as "Dif w/Congruence" and represented individuals with less children than their ideal, but they also expect enough children in the future to eliminate the discrepancy (N=579). The two groups for the second sample were "Male" and "Female," each representing the respective sex having a child in the home under six years of age (Male, N=455; Female, N=636).

Several demographic variables were selected for review in an attempt to facilitate comparison of groups, thereby aiding in interpretation of results. Marital status, for example, may help in this interpretation. Table I represents, by percentages, the marital status composition for

TABLE I
Marital Status

Group	Married	Non-Married*
Congruent (N=28)	83%	17%
Act > Id (N=10)	100%	0
Dif w/ Non-Congruence (N=161)	60%	40%
Dif w/ Congruence (N=579)	59%	41%
Male (N=455)	93%	7%
Female (N=636)	80%	20%

*includes widowed, divorced, separated and never married

each of the comparison groups. This table indicates that individuals who report that they have fewer children than they feel to be ideal ("Dif" groups) appeared less likely to be married at the time of the interview. Also, in the "Act > Id" group all respondents were married at the time of the interview.

Another variable, education, was evenly distributed across the groups. The only exception is the "Act > Id" group which had a lower percentage of college educated individuals relative to other groups (see Table II). Also, the two "Dif" groups appear slightly higher educated as shown by the percentages of those with at least four years of college. Age may be another variable worth noting with regard to interpretation of these data. It may be concluded from Table III that respondents who reported having less children than ideal ("Dif" groups) were younger than either the "Congruent" or the "Act > Id" groups. Furthermore, the respondents in the "Act > Id" group were the oldest relative to the other groups in sample one. "Male" and "Female" groups were evenly distributed over the age range.

Racial composition of the comparison groups appeared uniform. Approximately 87% of the respondents were white, 12% black and less than 1% another race (see Table IV). These percentages were consistent for both samples. Similarly, sex was fairly consistent across groups with a slightly greater amount of females in the "Congruent" and "Act > Id"

TABLE II

Educational Attainment of Comparison Groups by Percentage

Years Completed	Congruent (N=28)	Act > Id (N=10)	Dif w/ Non-Congruence (N=161)	Dif w/ Congruence (N=579)	Male (N=455)	Female (N=636)
1-11	33.3	38.5	19.6	10.0	28.2	30.3
12	28.6	53.8	42.4	38.0	35.0	43.9
13-14	19.0	00.0	18.8	23.9	15.9	13.5
15-16	9.5	7.7	14.3	19.2	13.4	8.7
17+	9.5	00.0	4.8	6.1	7.3	3.6

TABLE III

Age Composition of Comparison Groups by Percentage

Years	Congruent (N=28)	Age > Id (N=10)	Dif w/ Non-Congruence (N=161)	Dif w/ Congruence (N=579)	Male (N=455)	Female (N=636)
10-19	00.0	00.0	8.0	8.9	2.6	3.0
20-29	59.6	23.1	72.0	75.7	37.6	46.0
30-39	35.8	61.6	17.8	14.9	38.5	38.1
40-49	4.8	15.4	1.6	0.1	14.7	8.0
50-59	00.0	00.0	00.0	0.1	4.5	2.8
60+	00.0	00.0	0.4	00.0	1.2	1.2

TABLE IV

Racial Composition of Comparison Groups by Percentage

Race	Congruent (N=28)	Act > Id (N=10)	Dif w/ Non-Congruence (N=161)	Dif w/ Congruence (N=579)	Male (N=455)	Female (N=636)
White	83.3	84.6	81.3	90.1	86.6	83.9
Black	16.7	15.4	17.3	9.0	12.7	15.3
Other	00.0	00.0	1.3	1.0	0.7	0.8

groups (see Table V).

Other descriptive variables which may be relevant to this inquiry are income and religion. Income was distributed fairly evenly across all groups (see Table VI). It may be of interest to note that while "Act > Id" had the highest percentage of families making over \$30,000 per year, this group also had the lowest amount of education of any group; but, as previously mentioned, this group was also the oldest. This example illustrates the complexities often encountered when attempting to compare these variables across groups.

Religion was fairly consistent across the groups (see Table VII). Approximately 56% of the respondents were Protestant, 30% Catholic and less than 4% were either Jewish or reported no religious preference. The only serious departure from these percentages was for those respondents whose actual number of children exceeded their ideal; within this group 38.5% were Protestant, 38.5% were Catholic and over 23% reported having no religious preference.

Hypotheses Testing

All hypotheses were directional, therefore all test statistics were considered using a one-tailed test. Level of significance for hypotheses I, II and III was set at .10. While .10 is a less conservative significance level than usually employed in social science research, the exploratory nature of this inquiry justifies the level chosen.

TABLE V

Sexual Composition of Comparison Groups by Percentage

Sex	Congruent (N=28)	Act > Id (N=10)	Dif w/ Non-Congruence (N=161)	Dif w/ Congruence (N=579)
Male	45.2	38.5	52.9	51.1
Female	54.8	61.5	47.1	48.9

TABLE VI

Income of Comparison Groups by Percentage

Family Income*	Congruent (N=28)	Act > Id (N=10)	Dif w/ Non-Congruence (N=161)	Dif w/ Congruence (N=579)	Male (N=455)	Female (N=636)
\$10,000	10.8	20.0	28.5	17.6	13.6	20
\$10,000- \$19,000	42.8	50.0	43.3	44.5	50.9	44.9
\$20,000- \$29,000	32.1	20.0	21.8	26.6	24.8	21.5
\$30,000+	7.1	10.0	5.0	6.2	7.7	7.1

*may not equal 100% due to unreported income

TABLE VII

Religious Composition of Comparison Groups by Percentage

Religion	Congruent (N=28)	Act > Id (N=10)	Dif w/ Non-Congruence (N=161)	Dif w/ Congruence (N=579)	Male (N=455)	Female (N=636)
Protestant	54.8	38.5	51.1	57.2	59.3	65.1
Catholic	33.3	38.5	31.6	29.0	27.3	26.1
Jewish	00.0	00.0	3.6	2.7	2.3	2.2
None	11.9	23.1	11.6	9.6	9.2	5.4
Other	00.0	00.0	2.2	1.5	1.9	1.2

More specifically, given that this inquiry examined relationships heretofore unresearched, "indicators of direction or trend might be important and would be evidenced by a less substantial departure from the null hypothesis" (Hinkle et al., 1979:159).

Thus, by using a less conservative alpha level, the probability increases that a trend, if present, would be indicated. Conversely, if statistical tests prove non-significant, then the researcher can be confident that if any trend does exist, it is of low magnitude or that the hypothesis as constructed does not adequately test the relationship under investigation.

Level of significance for the fourth hypothesis was set at .05. Alpha level was increased for this hypothesis due to the substantial body of literature which suggested that women consistently report lower marital satisfaction if a young child is present in the home (Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Ryder, 1973). These consistent findings would indicate that a relationship does exist, therefore a more conservative alpha was appropriate.

Hypothesis I stated that couples who report congruence between ideal and actual number of children (Congruent group) will report higher Family Life Quality than those couples whose ideal exceeds actual and any expected children will not eliminate the difference (Dif w/Non-Congruence). The mean score difference of .0652 did not exceed the Dunn-Bonferroni

d value of .544 at the .10 level (see Table VIII). Thus, the null form of hypothesis I was retained and no support was found for the alternate directional hypothesis.

Hypothesis II stated that the "Dif w/Congruence" group would report higher Family Life Quality scores than would the "Dif w /Non-Congruence" group. No support was found for this hypothesis. The mean score difference of .0301 did not exceed the Dunn-Bonferroni d value of .237 at the .10 level (see Table VIII). Thus the null form of hypothesis II was retained and no support was found for the alternate directional hypothesis.

Hypothesis III stated that couples whose actual number of children exceed their expressed ideal ($Act > Id$), would report lower Family Life Quality than those couples who report congruence between actual and ideal. Similar to the previous hypotheses no support was found for the alternate directional hypothesis (see Table VIII). The mean score difference of $-.4286$ did not exceed the Dunn-Bonferroni d value of .568 at the .10 level.

Hypothesis IV stated that female respondents with a child less than six years of age will report lower Family Life Quality than comparable males. A comparison of mean scores between the two groups using a t-test yielded a t value of 1.89 which is significant at the .05 level (see Table IX). This finding allowed for the rejection of the null form of hypothesis IV, thereby supporting the fourth hypothesis.

TABLE VIII

Summary Table for Dunn-Bonferroni
a priori Comparisons Between Groups

Group	\bar{x}	\bar{x}	difference	d value	(α)
Congruent vs Dif w/ Non-Congruence	6.0714		.0652	.5438	.10
		6.0062			
Dif w/ Non-Congruence vs Dif w/ Congruence	6.0062		.0301	.2366	.10
		6.0363			
Congruent vs Act > Id	6.0714		-.4286	.5678	.10
		6.5000			

TABLE IX
 Summary Table for t-test
 Between Male and Female Groups

Group	\bar{x}	df	difference	t-value	c.v.	(α)
Male	6.2593					
		1053.9	.1194	1.8927*	1.645	.05
Female	6.1399					

*significant at the point .05 level

Discussion

Hypotheses I, II and III: Analysis of these data do not support the contention that individuals having congruence between actual and ideal number of children will report greater family life satisfaction than individuals not reporting congruence. Although the difference in hypotheses I and II were in the predicted direction, neither were significant. Actually, those individuals having more children than they felt to be ideal reported the greatest family life satisfaction. As a result of this high mean, the direction of the difference in hypothesis III was unanticipated.

Several factors are relevant in interpreting these results. For example, while the "Act > Id" group had the largest FLQ mean score, they also appeared to be the oldest group, with over 15% between 40 and 49 years of age. It may be that satisfaction with family increases with age regardless of the number of children. While support can be found for this thought (Campbell et al., 1976), other research indicates that age may be inversely related to family life satisfaction (Mancini, 1978). A possible explanation may be that age per se is not as important as is family stage. It is possible that family life satisfaction increases as the children become less of a burden and more a source of pride, e.g., children graduating from high school or attending college.

Another interesting characteristic of the "Act > Id" group

was that they appeared to be the least educated of any group, only about 8% of this group had three or four years of college, and no one in this group had done graduate work. Similarly, Campbell et al. (1976:339), reported that "people with little formal education are more satisfied [with family life] than those with advanced schooling." Furthermore, Russell (1974), noted that the highly-educated tended to report fewer gratifications from parenthood relative to those with less education. It is possible that increased education provides a parent with greater potential alternatives for self-fulfillment outside the family. Conversely, a lesser educated person with fewer opportunities may tend to seek gratification from his or her immediate environment, and in particular, their family. In other words, as an individual's potential horizons expand as a result of education, fewer gratifications may be derived from the primary family unit.

Religion may be another influential factor. As noted previously, the "Act > Id" group had a larger percentage of Catholic and no preference respondents than the other groups. This may suggest that some Catholics as well as individuals with no religious preference, perceive the additional children as a blessing, or possibly, an accident which turned out for the best. Again, since "Act > Id" appeared to be the oldest group, they may have reported the number they felt to be ideal, yet in retrospect they felt satisfied with the number they had. In essence they may be saying, "If I had it

to do over again, I would probably have had fewer children, but looking back I'm satisfied with the number I've had."

Another possible explanation for the high mean of the "Act > Id" group might be the "cognitive dissonance" phenomenon. The basic premise underlying the cognitive dissonance theory as developed by Festinger (1957) is that if dissonance exists for an individual between two cognitions or between a cognition and behavior, the individual will seek to reduce this dissonance. Such "dissonance may be lessened by exaggerating the value of what was actually chosen, devaluating the rejected alternative or deny the personal responsibility for the choice-or some combination of these modes of dissonance reduction" (Schellenberg, 1970: 120). Of particular interest to this discussion would be the initial mode of reduction, i.e., exaggerating the value of what was actually chosen. Researchers familiar with this area have found that individuals most strongly attempt self-justification when the individual acted contrary to his self-image (Berkowitz, 1975:387). The higher mean score of the "Act > Id" group may reflect an unconscious effort by the respondents of this group to justify having more children than they feel to be ideal. Stated differently, having more children than they feel to be ideal may create dissonance. This dissonance is possibly reduced by stating that these additional children in no way lessens family life satisfaction and in fact, these children make family activities very

enjoyable. Thus the high mean of the "Act > Id" group may simply reflect an effort to reduce dissonance.

The "value-behavior discrepancy" concept has been proposed as being one of the mechanisms by which number of children may affect marital satisfaction (Christensen, 1968). This investigation attempted to determine if this concept could be generalized to the domain of family life quality. Statistical analysis of these data did not support this generalization. Among the comparison groups statistically analyzed, none were significantly different in terms of mean scores. This is not to say that the concept tested is not a potentially important investigative variable, but as was tested herein, no evidence was found to support the concept. A possible factor in these non-significant findings was the lack of control on specific demographic or descriptive variables, e.g., education, income and age. No initial attempt was made to control these variables because the scarcity of research in this area provided no consistent evidence for controlling one variable over another.

Hypothesis IV: Statistical support for the fourth hypothesis indicates that females with a young child report lower Family Life Quality than comparable males. This was consistent with research done in the area of marital satisfaction (Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Ryder, 1973). The consistency of results in this area suggested that females find young children inhibitors of the satisfaction usually gained

through relations with family and spouse.

Considering the role women usually partake with regard to raising young children, the findings are not necessarily unexpected. It is usually the female who stays with the young child from morning until night; the mother is usually responsible for bathing, dressing and feeding the child while simultaneously attempting to clean the house as well as prepare the evening meal. If this is true parenthood, then it is experienced only vicariously by most men.

Having a young child in the home usually denotes a joyous period during which parents watch an infant develop into an individual with distinct habits and personality. Nevertheless, these data indicated that this period is not without its toll on the female--the young child probably interferes with spousal communication, reduces sexual activity and generally reduces the quality of interaction between spouses. However, this phenomenon may be slowly changing as men are beginning to share the burden of raising the child. Of course, how fast this change will occur, and if the magnitude of the change will drastically improve the role of the mother is not known. In the foreseeable future men may become increasingly involved in childrearing, but unless drastic changes occur, women will remain bearers of an unproportional amount of the burden of raising a child. As a result, women with young children will probably continue reporting lower marital and family life satisfaction than

comparable males.

Research Limitations

In using extant data such as the General Social Surveys, the researcher is limited in the number of potential variables available for incorporation in the investigation. Ideally, the researcher selects variables for investigation as dictated by previous research or theory, however with extant data only those variables which were focused upon in the original survey are available for use. Furthermore, the researcher has no control over how variables were measured or the manner in which they were administered.

Similarly, the composition and measurement of the criterion variable was decided upon by the original investigator. With regard to this inquiry, a single-item indicator was employed to measure family life quality. Ideally, the measurement of this variable would encompass various facets of family life satisfaction; the sibling relationship, for example, might be included in a global measurement of family life satisfaction. Other components of a global measure might include older parent-adult child relationships, spousal relationships or possibly extended family relationships.

Another limitation of these data was that the surveys were conducted cross-sectionally. Of particular importance to this inquiry was the finding that the group with the highest FLQ \bar{X} score was also the oldest. Given these data,

it is difficult to ascertain whether difference in the \bar{X} score was an effect of children, general cohort differences or a result of some other aspect of the passage of time, e.g., duration of marriage, or general maturation experiences of the parents.

Suggestions for Future Research

As was previously noted, family life satisfaction was assessed by a single-item indicator. Future researchers investigating this topic should consider the use of a multi-item indicator. Similar to other satisfaction domains, family life quality is multi-faceted and is often influenced by seemingly unrelated factors. The measurement of this variable should reflect its broad nature, and should consider both apparent direct influences as well as potential indirect influences.

Another consideration for future research would be the controlling of pertinent demographic variables. Age, for example, may have numerous effects on reported family life quality. Distinctly different scores for different age cohorts may simply reflect a different interpretation of what family life should consist of. Similarly, the importance of the child's age might be investigated further. Moreover, consideration should be given to the age of the parent simultaneously considering the child's age. In other words, it may be important to consider both the age of the parent and the child, relative to the other's age, while

investigating this domain. The control of other descriptive variables such as education and income may also be relevant to further investigation of this domain. For example, it may be that education is inversely related to family life quality and should be controlled for when examining the influences of children.

Future researchers might also consider the use of multiple regression procedures to determine the correlational relationship between these demographic variables and the dependent variable. This may allow the researcher a better understanding of the relationships under investigation, thereby providing aid in determining which variables should be controlled.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Summary

The present study sought to determine if specific situational factors influence the manner in which number of children affect family life quality. Situational factors investigated were those examining congruence between ideal number of children and actual number of children. Secondly, those individuals currently raising a young child were examined to determine if expressed family life quality differs as a function of respondent's sex.

Two samples were required for this inquiry; a separate sample was used for each type of situational factor examined. The samples were drawn from the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. The surveys used for this inquiry were conducted from 1973 to 1977.

Sample one was used in investigating the congruence factor with regard to ideal and actual number of children. This sample contained 778 individuals, each of whom were put into one of four groups: the "Congruent" group, the "Actual greater than Ideal" group, the "Difference with Non-Congruence" group, and the "Difference with Congruence" group. Each group represented varying degrees and direction of congruence between ideal number of children and actual. The criterion variable used was a single-item indicator of

family life satisfaction. A \bar{X} score for family life satisfaction was obtained for each group. An a priori comparison of these \bar{X} s was performed by using Dunn's (Bonferroni t) multiple comparison procedure for planned comparisons. All test statistics were considered using a one-tailed test and the level of significance for analysis of all groups in sample one were at .10.

It was hypothesized that those individuals who reported congruence between ideal number of children and actual number would report higher family life satisfaction than those who reported actual being higher than ideal. No support was found for this hypothesis. It was also hypothesized that the "Congruent" group would report higher family life quality scores than the "Difference with Non-Congruence" group. No support was found for this hypothesis. It was further hypothesized that the "Difference with Non-Congruence" group would report lower family life satisfaction scores than would the "Difference with Congruence" group. Again, no support was found for this hypothesis.

Sample two was used in investigating the relationship between sex of respondent and family life quality if a young child was present in the home. This sample contained 1091 individuals. As with sample one, the criterion variable used was a single-item indicator of family life satisfaction. It was hypothesized that female respondents with a child less than six years of age would report lower family life

quality than comparable males. A comparison of mean scores for the two groups using a t-test yielded a significant t value at the .05 level.

The results from hypotheses I, II and III (sample one) did not support the "value-behavior discrepancy" concept with regard to family life satisfaction. A possible explanation for these findings may have been the lack of control on specific demographic variables, e.g., age, education. Future research in this area would benefit from the controlling of these variables. Results from hypothesis IV (sample two) suggest that females find young children inhibitors of the satisfaction usually gained through relations with family and spouse. Future research might seek to determine under what conditions this phenomenon maintains itself, e.g., "at what age is the child when the female begins to report the same family life satisfaction scores as the male?"

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APPENDIX A

How much satisfaction do you get from your family life?

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>SCORE</u>	<u>YEAR</u>					<u>All</u>
		<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	
None. . . . .	.1	25	19	28	31	26	129
A little. . . . .	.2	33	30	23	33	21	140
Some. . . . .	.3	51	35	37	39	43	205
A fair amount	.4	128	102	98	92	112	532
Quite a bit	.5	146	157	155	161	181	800
A great deal.	.6	468	496	488	564	501	2517
A very great deal7	642	641	653	570	637	3143

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CONDITIONAL INFLUENCES ON CHILDREN
AND THE QUALITY OF FAMILY LIFE

by

WILLIAM A. GRIFFIN

(Abstract)

The purpose of this inquiry was to determine if specific situational factors influence the manner in which number of children affect family life quality. Situational factors examined were: congruence between ideal number of children and actual; and secondly, expressed differences in family life quality by sex given similar conditional influences. Data were drawn from five recent U.S. national surveys.

Sample one, which was used in examining the congruence concept, contained 778 individuals. The sample was divided into four groups, each represented varying degrees and direction of congruence between ideal number of children and actual. Dunn-Bonferroni a priori comparisons were used to compare mean family life satisfaction scores for selected groups. Findings indicated that differing degrees of congruence between ideal and actual number of children did not affect family life quality.

A second sample of 1091 respondents was used to determine if women with young children reported lower family life satisfaction than comparable males. A t-test showed significant differences existed between males and females

if a young child was present in the home. These findings indicate that young children have a detrimental effect on perceived family life quality for females.

The two situational factors examined indicate that degree and direction of congruence between ideal and actual number of children does not influence family life quality. Secondly, young children inhibit perceived family life satisfaction among females.