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**Adult children who return home to live: The effects on parents'
marital satisfaction in the context of the family life cycle**

Bledsoe, Chad Allen, M.A.

The University of Arizona, 1991

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ADULT CHILDREN WHO RETURN HOME TO LIVE:
THE EFFECTS ON PARENTS' MARITAL SATISFACTION
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

by

Chad Allen Bledsoe

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
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1991

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate if adult children who have returned home to live affect their parents' marital satisfaction. The contributing factors that preceded the return of these adult children were also examined.

To measure marital satisfaction, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) Scale was used. The Marital Conventionalization Scale (MCS) was also utilized to measure marital social desirability distortion.

Seventy-seven married individuals, recruited from the general population, were divided into three subgroups consisting of parents whose adult children have either returned, departed from, or remained at home. Participants were administered a questionnaire containing specific questions regarding one's adult children along with the two test instruments.

The findings indicate no significant differences in marital satisfaction between parents who have returning adult children and the other two subgroups. However, many factors (financial problems, college, divorce, etc.) contributing to an adult child's presence at home were discovered.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most parents in the United States seem to enjoy the stage in the family life cycle known as the "launching" or "empty nest" stage in which young adult children leave home. Generally, research has shown this stage to be one of increased satisfactions in marriage and family lifestyle (Axelson, 1960; Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Deutscher, 1964; Glen, 1975; Harkins, 1978). As the last of the children leave, tensions are eased and parents seem to suffer no permanent loss (Lewis, Volk, & Duncan, 1989; Spanier, Lewis, & Cole, 1975). On the other hand, there is a small number of mothers and fathers who experience a more negative impact and report deep unhappiness as a result of the last child leaving home (Barber, 1981; Lewis et al., 1989). This is usually due to overinvolvement or overprotection of the children, or even due to a sudden departure from home, e.g., child going into the military (Lewis et al., 1989). There is stronger evidence, though, to support the idea that the transition to the launching stage is neither a crisis nor a serious challenge to parents (Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972).

However, there is a growing phenomenon in this country which has been addressed both in the popular press and in the research journals that may be producing areas of possible conflict and stress within the family during the empty nest stage; adult children in increasing numbers are returning home to live with their parents (Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Glick & Lin, 1985; Lewis et al., 1989; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Okimoto & Stegall, 1987). Stressful relations also occur when adult children remain at home. Most

research, though, tends to indicate that the "fledgling adult" who returns home after some period of time tends to promote greater stress in the family due to the unexpectedness of their return (Hill, 1958; Lewis et al., 1989; Young, 1984) that may, in addition, cause an interruption of parent marital freedoms and renegotiations (Carter & McGoldrick, 1988; Schram, 1979).

Recent figures from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that 60% of men and 48% of women between the ages of 18 to 24 were living with their parents in 1985 (Giges, 1987; Toufexis, 1987). Okimoto and Stegall (1987) found that over 22 million young adults were sharing the same household as their parents which marks a 50% increase since 1970. In another related study, according to Clemens and Axelson (1985), the number of adult children between 18 and 34 years of age living with their parents between 1970 and 1983 has "skyrocketed by 84.8 percent" (p. 260). For those whose home-dwelling adult child was 22 years old and older, "80 percent had not planned to have the child home at this time" (p. 261).

Reasons Adult Children Return

Adult children who return home to live, or "boomerang kids" as they have been labeled (Okimoto & Stegall, 1987; Hayes, 1988) are increasing in number for a variety of reasons, such as marital disruption, becoming a single parent, completing college, loss of a job, problems with drugs or alcohol, being handicapped, or providing care to needy parents (Glick & Lin, 1986; Lewis et al., 1989). Bane (1976) cited the major reason for young adults either returning or remaining home as being economic or, more specifically, due to the children's financial problems (i.e. low income, lack of a job, etc.).

The financial, emotional, and social pressures on today's young adults are many and all-encompassing. Now parents, whose kids were "supposed to" grow up, leave home, and make lives for themselves, are faced with feelings of confusion, failure, obligation, and invasion as a result of their children's return (Okimoto & Stegall, 1987). This not only puts the parent-child relationship in potential conflict and stress, but also may have significant negative effects upon the parents' marriage and, more specifically, their marital satisfaction (Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Lewis et al., 1989; Glick & Lin, 1986). So far, direct research in this area has been very limited and mostly generalized from related studies.

Interruption in the Family Life Cycle

In the context of the family life cycle theory (Duvall & Miller, 1985; Carter & McGoldrick, 1988; Mattessich & Hill, 1987), the marital bond regains prominence during the launching period. Marital adjustments are pivotal at this stage which is usually the longest in the family life cycle, lasting 20 years or more until retirement. Each stage represents a transition point when the family initiates different behavior patterns (Trost, 1974). "Letting go of child-rearing leaves more time available for couples to devote to self-reflection. For many individuals the shift has been gradual, or there does not seem to be a great urgency to change; for others, there seems to be a sudden awakening to some forgotten aspect of life or an impulse to undertake some very different direction" (McCullough & Rutenberg, 1988 p. 289). Therefore, an unplanned interruption of the launching stage, as in the case of a returning adult child, may cause either a delay, which would allow the parents to put their marital focus on hold, or a disruption, which would

hinder marital rediscovery causing possible resentment toward the children and dissatisfaction in the marriage.

Marital Satisfaction Disturbed

People marry for several reasons, mainly in a search for personal happiness or fulfillment. During the marriage relationship there are many influences, regardless of the reasons for marrying, which may affect satisfaction in marriage. Cox (1984) includes some internal and external factors that may contribute to the level of fulfillment in marriage. These factors include employment and economic status, interaction patterns, personality, background similarities, gender role attitudes, and the presence of children. Marital satisfaction between couples basically refers to the individual spouses' subjective assessment of happiness with the relationship (Filsinger, 1984). Again, with regard to the family life cycle, the most convincing findings acknowledge the curvilinear model which posits an increase of reported marital happiness during the postparental or launching stage (Schram, 1979).

Since the launching stage seems to be one of the few conclusive periods in the family life cycle at which a change in marital satisfaction occurs, the present study pinpointed and examined at least one factor which might contribute to a disturbance in marital happiness. Schram (1979, p. 11) even recommended

. . . it would seem appropriate to study marital satisfaction and the family life cycle by examining transitional periods as they are defined and conceived of by the actors themselves. We need to explore more fully those junctures which function as bridges from one stage to the next. Existing data do not inform us about these periods. Were there crises at certain times (e.g. between the launching and postparental stages) that needed to be worked through?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects that adult children who return home have on their parents' marital satisfaction. This causal-comparative study attempted to discover whether a significant difference in parent marital satisfaction exists in relation to three groups: (1) adult children who return home to live, (2) adult children who have remained at home, and (3) adult children who have all departed from home. Secondly, this study was designed to examine, from the parents' perspective, the reasons for which adult children return, may return, or remain at home.

It was hoped that the results of this study would produce valuable information for marriage and family counselors who are dealing with this issue. A better understanding of the dynamics of parent-adult child relationships during the launching period may enhance more effective interventions thus leading to healthier family and marital adjustment.

Hypotheses

In general, research questions to be investigated in this study were:

1. Is there a significant difference in reported marital satisfaction scores between parents who have adult children that have returned home versus those whose adult children have either remained or left home?
2. For what reasons, from the parents' perspective, do adult children return or remain home?
3. Is there a significant difference in reported marital satisfaction scores between respondents from "church" groups versus "other" groups?

Significance of the Study

Recent literature both in research publications and in the popular press seems to indicate that there has been an increase in the number of adult children who have returned home to live with their parents and the numbers are still increasing (Okimoto & Stegall, 1987; Clemens & Axelson, 1985). The results of this study might help counselors, parents, and even adult children to gain an increased awareness of the "boomerang" phenomenon. There is a need to realize that (1) an adult child's presence at home may not only be detrimental to the adult child's independence but also to parent marital relationships and (2) there are several factors influencing an adult child's return.

Assumptions

Several assumptions underlie the present study:

1. Individual participants understood clearly all of the vocabulary in the questionnaire.
2. Participants would answer survey questions completely, objectively, and in the present tense.
3. Participants were married and had children or step-children between the ages of 18 to 29 years.
4. Spouses answered questionnaires independently.

Limitations

There were some limitations possibly affecting generalizability of the findings::

1. Participants were volunteers contacted within certain institutions, sample not completely random.

2. Questionnaire was not designed to monitor or observe cross-cultural or ethnic differences; study cannot be generalized beyond the sample population.
3. Results within individual couples (between husbands and wives) were not examined.
4. Marital satisfaction may have been influenced by factors other than the presence or absence of adult children.
5. Since the Marital Conventionalization Scale was used in conjunction with the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, it may be revealed that participants answered items with socially desirable responses which could have masked the effects that the researcher was looking for.

Definition of Terms

Specific terminology applicable to the study is reviewed in the following:

Adult Child: Any person between the age of 18 and 29 years.

Boomerang Kid: An adult child who has returned home to live with his or her parents (Okimoto & Stegall, 1987); also referred to as Fledgling Adult.

Empty Nest: The point in time during the family life cycle when the last child has left home; also referred to as the Launching Stage and the Postparental Period. This stage usually lasts up to 15 years and sometimes longer (Lewis et al., 1989; Clemens & Axelson, 1985).

Family Life Cycle: Nodal events related to the comings and goings of family members: marriage, birth and child rearing, departure of children from home, retirement, and death. The cycle is broken down into eight stages (Duvall & Miller, 1985). Life-

cycle stages provide a means to categorize families that experience similar events, crises, developmental tasks, etc. (Schnittger & Bird, 1990).

Home: Refers to the place of an adult child's origin; a place where his or her parents reside.

Marital Conventionalization: "The extent to which a person distorts the appraisal of his marriage in the direction of social desirability" (Edmonds, 1967, p. 681).

Marital Satisfaction: "An attitude of greater or lesser favorability toward one's own marital relationship" (Roach, Frazier, & Bowden, 1981, p. 537). It is a subjective assessment of happiness with the relationship.

Social Desirability: Involves an attempt to answer questionnaire items in order to present oneself in the best possible light.

The Curvilinear Model: "The postparental stage is a time of greater freedom and independence for the husband and wife who no longer need be concerned with the responsibilities of children in the home" (Deutscher, 1964, as cited in Schram, 1979).

Summary

The marriage relationships of parents, who have adult children returning home may be significantly influenced in a negative direction. The hypotheses given are based on family life cycle theories, the curvilinear model, and current research findings. An overview of the phenomenon of adult children who return home and the factors contributing to marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction were presented. Also, a discussion of the purpose, some assumptions, and some limitations of this study were stated.

According to the information gathered in Chapter 1 there is an apparent problem that could indirectly disrupt marital happiness through a reverse in the flow of the family life cycle, specifically at the launching stage. In Chapter 2 more information, including past and current literature related to the present study, is reviewed. Chapter 3 describes the research methods and procedures of the study. The results obtained based on the three hypotheses and collected by means of a short questionnaire are presented in Chapter 4. And, finally, some conclusions and implications of the study as well as recommendations for further research is discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter a review of the literature is presented and described in three parts. The first part includes a brief overview of the family life cycle theory and more specifically the launching stage, where adult-aged children leave their parents' home thereby ushering in a period of independence for the children and relationship renegotiations for the parents. Also, this section will review the theory as it relates to traditional middle-class development, ethnic and cultural differences, and extraneous variables (illness, death, alcoholism, and divorce) that can affect normal stage development.

Part two considers the concept of marital satisfaction including a definition of terms, some significant predictors, and the issue of curvilinearity versus linearity. This section will then briefly analyze the Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) Scale (Schumm, Milliken, Poresky, Bollman, & Jurich, 1983) and the Marital Conventionalization Scale (MCS) (Edmonds, 1967) as research measures of marital happiness and social desirability distortion respectively.

Finally, the third part presents the growing phenomenon of adult children who return home to live with their parents along with a review of some reasons for their return. This section will also focus on potential areas of conflict, especially in relational issues, as well as some areas of enhancement or positive effects.

The Family Life Cycle

The family life cycle theory maintains a longitudinal view of life within particular families (Duvall & Miller, 1985). The family life cycle is divided into stages, or periods, of development which are distinct and occur, typically, in a certain sequence (Aldous, 1978, as cited in Duvall & Miller, 1985). Duvall (1977) broke these stages into eight separate nodal events; this schema has become the most widely accepted. The eight events occur as follows: (1) married couples, (2) childbearing families, (3) families with preschool children, (4) families with schoolchildren, (5) families with teenagers, (6) families launching young adults, (7) middle-aged parents, and (8) aging family members (Duvall & Miller, 1985).

When family development is observed, using the family life cycle as a frame of reference, then there can be predictability due to the commonality of phases and patterns of family living (Hill & Mattessich, 1979, as cited in Duvall & Miller, 1985). From the family life cycle perspective, symptoms and dysfunctions relating to "normal" developmental functioning over time can be attended to by sociologists, therapists, and other mental health professionals in order to help reestablish a family's momentum (Carter & McGoldrick, 1988). Thus, the family life cycle theory provides a useful tool in examining family progress and change and can help mental health professionals to guide their assessments and treatments of family problems.

The Launching Stage

Family stress has been observed by Carter and McGoldrick (1988) to be greatest at points of transition from one stage to the next. Therefore, symptoms of family dysfunction usually appear during interruptions or dislocations in the family life cycle. One

such transition point at which increased structural changes occur is between the launching and postparental stages; it begins with the first child's exit from home and ends when all the children are no longer regular members of the parents' home (Axelson, 1960). Normally, at the launching stage, adult-aged children between 18 and 25 years old leave home to establish autonomy, vocational interests, and love relationships including marriage (Duvall & Miller, 1985; McCullough & Rutenberg, 1988).

During this time, these adult children experience many stressors and crises as well as growth and success in nearly every area of life. Some stressors include: financial difficulties (lack of career opportunities, low paying jobs, high costs of living, etc.); drug and/or alcohol problems; divorce; mental or emotional instability; and delayed independence (Duvall & Miller, 1985; Okimoto & Stegall, 1987). Delayed independence refers to the phenomenon of "enmeshment" or lack of autonomy establishment (Okimoto & Stegall, 1987). These crises can obviously hinder normal development and produce negative impacts on newly launched adult children including feelings of inadequacy, abandonment, and hopelessness (Anderson & Fleming, 1986; Haley, 1980; Lewis et al., 1989).

Successful adult children, on the other hand, establish autonomy and independence in spite of the social, economic, and emotional pressures and begin new family life cycles of their own or remain as single functioning and productive members of society (Okimoto & Stegall, 1987). Success for the young adult does not necessarily mean having financial security, career attainment, etc.; it means that an individual can cope with life's problems responsibly and become a self-governing person (Duvall & Miller, 1985).

As the last child leaves home, the parents, whose ages range somewhere between the mid-40s to the mid-60s, now constitute the nuclear family alone. The couple now

attempts to maintain the husband-wife relationship through new patterns of interaction (Duvall & Miller, 1985). This is done in order to avoid situational crises (Barber, 1981; Hill, 1958). Hill (1958) found that the addition or loss, in this case, of any family member may cause stress within that family. Some parents report deep unhappiness following the last child's departure (Barber, 1981). Research studies have shown that women (mothers) have a more negative and pessimistic orientation than men (fathers) following the launching stage. Such an orientation may lead to depression (Lewis et al, 1989; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Neugarten, 1970).

However, most parents in the United States seem to thrive and favor the postparental or "empty nest" period and do not suffer loss as the last child exits (Axelson, 1960; Glen, 1975; Harkins, 1978; Lewis et al., 1989; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972). In fact, this stage in the family life cycle is one of greater marital satisfaction and new, closer adult-to-adult relations with children (Deutscher, 1964; Duvall & Miller, 1985; McCullough & Rutenberg, 1988; Neugarten, 1970). Deutscher (1964) referred to this stage as a "golden period" rather than a crisis, as spouses share increased activities and interpersonal discoveries. Research, overall, seems to substantiate the latter view of increased marital bliss, relief, and positive transition for parents in the empty nest period (Deutscher, 1970; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Neugarten, 1970) and refute the former view--transitional crises due to inadequate support and insufficiency of data.

Ethnic Differences

Up to this point the family life cycle theory, particularly the launching and middle-aged (postparental) stages, have focused primarily on traditional White, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class development. The concept of family is not the same across cultures and

ethnic identity varies widely both within groups and between groups (McGoldrick, 1988). Duvall and Miller (1985, p. 358) stated, "Ethnicity shapes family traditions, determines many family patterns and beliefs, is carried on through generations, and influences a families identification of self and others." Life cycle stages differ only in relation to points of transition when considering ethnicity.

For example, when examining the launching stage cross-culturally, families deal with change in contrast. White (WASP) families seem to have the most difficulty when children are not launched "on time" as dependency becomes a problem issue (McCullough & Rutenberg, 1988; McGoldrick, 1988). In her article "Ethnicity and the Family Life Cycle," Monica McGoldrick (1988) compared and contrasted different ethnic groups with regard to the launching of adult children:

1. Italian families usually add newcomers through marriage and birth thus avoiding the launching of children altogether. Family loyalty is expected from adult children; independent achievement is discouraged. Adult children are to remain together working and living within the community, ambitions to do otherwise could lead to family betrayal.
2. In Puerto Rican families the launching phase may become a problem within the marriage relationship. In a group where women are constricted to occupy the "inferior roles" and where wives were condemned for moving beyond the sphere of homemaker, serious crises may occur within Puerto Rican marriages following the children's exit. Yet, since the expectation for marital intimacy is not high and cultural values dictate gender roles, potential disappointment is lessened.

3. The primary problem in Jewish families is that an adult child who lacks in "success" is not allowed to leave with honor. So children either leave with guilt from their parents or remain ambivalently close. Active and intimate relationships between children and parents are expected to be ongoing; autonomous functioning is not reinforced.

Literature concerning Blacks, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and others in relation to the launching or postparental stages is sparse. McGoldrick (1988, pp. 77 & 78) devoted only a page-and-a-half to this subject.

Hines (1988) focused on poor Black families and proposed a shortened, three stage life cycle: adolescence (unattached adulthood), the family with young children, and the family in later life. "There is generally less calendar time in poor Black families for the unfolding of various developmental stages and they face numerous unpredictable life crises at each stage" (p. 517) These individuals are forced to assume responsibilities that they are not ready for, or capable of, due to inadequate time and opportunities. Therefore, stress is unpredictable, multifaceted, and highly prevalent within impoverished Black families especially at points of transition which oftentimes becomes blurred (Hines, 1988).

Most of the information of the launching and postparental stages, retrieved from other sources, dealt primarily with populational, educational, occupational, and general analyses between groups. Transitional issues at these crucial stages of the family life cycle seemed to be neglected for some families of ethnicity.

Extraneous Influences

Normal stage development within the family life cycle can be interrupted or changed due to extraneous factors. Two such factors are chronic illness and death (Brown, 1988; Rolland, 1988). All transitions within the family life cycle involve the basic processes of endings and beginnings. As the chronic illness of a family member coincides with a developmental transition point, issues surrounding independence or enmeshment become magnified (Rolland, 1988). For example in the launching stage, there may be a clash between separation issues and the demands of the chronically disabled member, whether parent or child (Rolland, 1988). Death, too, causes disruption in family development.

The degree of disruption to the family system is affected by a number of factors, the most significant of which are (1) the social and ethnic context of death; (2) the history of previous losses; (3) the timing of death in the life cycle; (4) the nature of the death or serious illness; (5) the position and function of the person in the family system; and (6) the openness of the family system (Brown, 1988; p. 458).

Another factor which greatly influences normal stage development is alcoholism. Whether alcoholism begins early or late in the family life cycle, or ends early or late, dysfunction will occur either obviously or insidiously (Vaillant, 1983, as cited in Krestan & Bepko, 1988). As the family develops through the life cycle it intersects with the alcoholic individual's stage development creating a situation where, "the alcohol problem may become both a cause and an effect of dysfunction" (Krestan & Bepko, 1988; p. 483). At the launching phase the impact of alcoholism is significant as parents are faced with unresolved marital issues where drinking may: be an attempt to avoid these issues, become a focus of concern to the nondrinking spouse, or replace the absence of adult children (Krestan & Bepko, 1988).

Finally, probably the most disruptive event in the family life cycling process is divorce (Carter & McGoldrick, 1988). Developmental stages, interrupted and changed by the divorce of parents, proceed in a complex new form since the shape of the family has been irrevocably altered (Peck & Manocherian, 1988). Again when considering the launching period, a couple's divorce, especially after a lengthy marriage and a long history together, can cause great upheaval. Adult children, even though they are on their way out of the home, can be imposed with feelings of increased responsibility toward their parents and pressures to choose sides (Ahrons, 1986, as cited in Peck & Manocherian, 1988). Divorce occurs at this stage possibly because parents, who stayed together "for the children's sake," are now free to end an unhappy marriage (Peck & Manocherian, 1988). The young adults, at this point, may experience the loss of family, a sense of abandonment, and confusion about marriage in their own lives (Ahrons, 1986; as cited in Peck & Manocherian, 1988).

The family life cycle theory provides an adequate means of categorizing family development by examining the stages and transitions that a particular family unit experiences (Mattessich & Hill, 1987).

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is defined by Hawkins (1968, p. 648) as, ". . . the subjective feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by a spouse when considering all current aspects of his (her) marriage. This variable is conceived of as a continuum running from much satisfaction to much dissatisfaction." As such, marital satisfaction focuses on the individuals perception of marriage rather than on the couple's conjoint perception (Anderson, Russell, & Schumm, 1983). Marital satisfaction is one of a few

terms which describes the qualitative status of the marriage relationship, others include marital adjustment, marital quality, and marital stability (Anderson et al., 1983; Burnett, 1987; Filsinger, 1984; Rollins & Cannon, 1974; Sabetelli, 1988). Filsinger (1984, p. 680) defined the various terms which have been applied to evaluating the degree of marital success:

"Marital satisfaction" refers to happiness with the relationship and a desire for its continuance. "Marital adjustment" refers to the overall level to which the individuals have fitted together into a smooth functioning dyad. "Marital quality" is often used as a synonym for adjustment, but refers more to a detached evaluation of the characteristics of the relationship.

Marital stability refers to a relationship which ends, naturally, with the death of one of the spouses (Filsinger, 1984; Spanier, 1979). Marital satisfaction or happiness, in summary, is a spouse's subjective experience gained as a consequence of marital compatibility (Compaan, 1985).

Significant Predictors

Individual reports of happiness in marriage are based on factors which can contribute to the marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction, i.e., adequacy of marital role performance, similarity of social and economic backgrounds, and shared expectations (Cox, 1984; Rollins & Cannon, 1974). Direct research has revealed that there are also significant predictors of marital satisfaction including family life cycle categories, age of couple, length of marriage, and presence and/or number of children (Anderson et al., 1983; Nock, 1979; Spanier et al., 1979). Significant predictors of perceived marital quality as found by Nock (1979) included all of the above except for age of the couple. Spanier et al. (1979) found all of the above to be significant predictors excluding the presence and number of children. Anderson et al. (1983) found only family life cycle categories and total number of children

to be significant. The "absence of children" group of married couples had higher marital satisfaction scores than the "presence of children" group, and the family life cycle is a significant predictor of variance specifically when marital satisfaction is the criterion variable (Anderson et al., 1983).

Curvilinearity versus Linearity

There is an issue in the literature which raises a question concerning the shape of the relationship between family life cycle stages and levels of marital satisfaction; is the relationship linear or curvilinear (Anderson et al., 1983; Hudson & Murphy, 1980; Rollins & Cannon, 1974; Schram, 1979; Spanier et al., 1975)? Schram (1979) stated, "According to the existing research findings, at best, it appears that the level of happiness in a marriage varies only slightly by the stage of the family life cycle (p. 10). The most convincing finding is represented as a curvilinear model (p. 7)." In the curvilinear model the level of marital satisfaction is high for both spouses at the newly married stage. Then, there is a general drop in satisfaction shortly after marriage which bottoms out in stage 4 (families with school children) and rises again to a high point following the launching stage (Spanier et al., 1975). Rollins and Cannon (1974) also showed that the variation of marital satisfaction through the family life cycle follows a U-shaped or curvilinear path. However, Hudson and Murphy's (1980) research maintains a declining linear trend for marital relationships along the life cycle. The linear model posits that marital satisfaction continues to decline after its high point in stage 1 (marriage) through the remainder of the family life cycle, ending in moderate satisfaction or even dissatisfaction as compared to the first stage (Hudson & Murphy, 1980). Yet, Anderson et al. (1983) supported the

curvilinear model in a study which, as part of the research questions, compared the differing models.

Regarding the postparental stage, evidence shows that reports of marital difficulties tend to decline, possibly as a result of problem resolution earlier in the marriage or minimization of existing problems due to long marriage investment (Schram, 1979). Other evidence supports the notion that the absence of grown children allows greater marital freedoms and communication (Deutscher, 1964; Glenn, 1975). Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) found the "empty nest" stage to be a favorable turning point for both spouses. Axelson (1960, p. 67) concluded that the postparental period "seems as satisfying (in marriage) as earlier periods."

Measures of Marital Satisfaction

In research studies, individuals within a marriage relationship report marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction usually through paper-and-pencil tests. There are at least six well-established measures of marital adjustment, satisfaction, and quality: the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) (Locke & Wallace, 1959), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) (Spanier, 1976), the Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI) (Snyder, 1979), the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) (Roach, Frazier, & Bowden, 1981), the Quality Marriage Index (QMI) (Norton, 1983), and the KMS scale (Schumm, Milliken et al., 1983). Summaries of their reliability and validity information as well as assessments of their respective uses can be found in Sabetelli (1988) and Burnett (1987).

In the present study, the KMS scale (Schumm, Milliken et al., 1983) was used since it is a short, direct assessment of marital satisfaction and possesses adequate reliability and validity (Sabetelli, 1988). The KMS scale is a three-item survey in which individual spouses

can respond to a 7-point Likert scale ranging from extremely dissatisfied (Point 1) to extremely satisfied (Point 7) (Schumm, Anderson et al., 1985). The three items are: "1. How satisfied are you with your marriage? 2. How satisfied are you with your husband (wife) as a spouse? 3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband (wife)?" (Schumm et al., 1986, p. 387). The KMS scale has high internal consistency reliability (Schumm, Scanlon, Crow, Green, & Buckler, 1983; Schumm, Barnes, Bollman, Jurich, & Bugaighus, 1985), significant test-retest reliability (Mitchell, Newell, & Schumm, 1983; Schumm et al., 1986), and criterion-related validity (Schumm, Anderson et al., 1985). Specific statistical information on reliability and validity of the KMS scale along with its limitations will be reviewed in Chapter 3.

The Marital Conventionalization Scale (MCS) (Edmonds, 1967) was also used in the present study both as a control variable and a measure of social desirability distortion. Edmonds (p. 682) designed the MCS to measure "the extent to which the appraisal of a phenomenon (marital satisfaction) is distorted in the direction of social desirability." Such "distortion," according to the researcher, is usually unintentional. A short, 15-item, form of the MCS, as used in this study, was derived from a 50-item long form containing 34 items that discriminates social desirability and 16 neutral items. Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich (1981) recommended the usefulness of the MCS in studies of marital satisfaction as a control variable for discounting important predictors of marital adjustment.

The MCS has internal consistency reliability, construct validity (though questionable), content validity, and concurrent validity according to only three studies found in the literature that measure directly the MCS's statistical properties (Edmonds, 1967; Edmonds,

Withers, & Dibatista, 1972; Schumm et al., 1981). Again, like the KMS scale, specifics on the MCS are reviewed in the following chapter.

Adult Children Returning Home

As reviewed previously, there are several factors that either positively or negatively influence normal stage development of the family life cycle, and, consequently marital happiness. Another factor that occurs in many families in the United States, that may affect parents' marital satisfaction at the launching stage, is the return of young adults to live with their parents. The phenomenon of adult children returning home has been widely addressed in recent popular press articles, yet direct research on this topic is limited.

Adult-aged children, those between the ages of 18 to 24 (in some studies 18 to 29) years old, who have previously been launched from their homes of origin, are returning home to live with their parents (Bane, 1976; Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Forsyth & Eddington, 1989; Glick & Lin, 1986; Lewis et al., 1989; Okimoto & Stegall, 1987). According to Okimoto and Stegall (1987), these "boomerang kids" are increasing in number and are therefore creating much confusion and difficulty within the family unit both for the parents and the adult children.

Boomerang kids are returning home in response to both the traditional problems of financial need and unemployment as well as other problems like dependency, drug and alcohol abuse, single parenthood, divorce, and parental happiness (Bane, 1976; Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Forsyth & Eddington, 1989; Glick & Lin, 1986; Okimoto & Stegall, 1987). The major reason for the boomerang phenomenon, as shown in research, is due to adult children's financial difficulties (Bane, 1976; Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Forsyth & Eddington, 1989).

In their book, Boomerang Kids, Okimoto and Stegall (1987) revealed many important changes which have occurred in only one generation. "The parents of boomerang kids tended to establish their own households not long after they reached the age of twenty" (p. 18). In relation to their parents, adult children today are faced with many social and economic changes since the fifties and early sixties. Specifically, the marriage rate has "dropped almost 50 percent for young adults between the ages of twenty to twenty-four" (p. 19). This may be due to different sexual mores which were extremely conservative in the fifties as compared to today's standards. "The only way to have sex without guilt and hypocrisy was to marry, and marry they did" (p. 18). Today, premarital sex is a "choice" as opposed to being "immoral" or a "sin," which has led to a remarkable increase in single mothers.

Other changes include the divorce rate which has doubled even since 1970, the trend of marrying later or never has also doubled since 1970, the rise of alcohol and drug abuse, the rise in the suicide rate which has "climbed 150 percent" since the sixties (Okimoto & Stegall, p. 26), and the dramatic change in the economy. "The cost of living has increased by 267 percent since 1970" (p. 22). College tuition, including room and board, at a state university changed from \$1,051 in 1965 to approximately \$6,900 in 1990. The unemployment rate is high. The cost of housing has risen enormously. Food costs have doubled and even tripled in some areas. And, finally, the purchasing power of the dollar has fallen by almost "300 percent since 1970" (p. 23).

Potential Conflict

Even though there are several reasons for which adult children return home to parents who seem willing to allow them back, there may be areas of conflict and

dissatisfaction caused by an unexpected return, parent-child relational friction, and unstructured living arrangements (Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Hill, 1958; Young, 1984). Clemens and Axelson (1985, p. 261) conducted a study with 39 respondents from western Virginia (a nonrandom sample) to assess, through a self-administered questionnaire, "factors which would lead to possible conflict between parents and their adult children." The respondents consisted of 8 married males, 24 married females, 5 divorced females, 1 separated female, and 1 widowed female with adult children between 18 to 39 years old living at home. The average of male and female children was 22 years.

Results indicated that, of those parents with adult children at home, "58% were happy with the arrangement" (Clemens & Axelson, p. 261). Yet, only 40% of the respondents wanted this arrangement to continue. Regarding the effects on the parents' marriage relationship, 47.6% complained of negative effects, while 52.4% reported neutral or even positive effects with adult children living in their homes. "Expressions of 'strained,' 'caused conflict,' and 'added stress' were common among the responses. Based upon this limited sample, one should suspect that a considerable amount of stress and strain is placed upon marital relationships when an older child returns home" (p. 262).

Also notable is the larger percentage of parents who reported positive effects in their marriages due to the return of adult children. In fact, in a study by Suito and Pillemer (1988), results show that, for parents 65 and older, adult children lived quite harmoniously with their parents and that high levels of conflict between generations living together was only a myth. Their findings suggest that marital conflict or family discord occurs only under certain specific circumstances. And, in a related study, adult children return to rural homes "may be a 'mixed blessing' to farm fathers" (p. 174; Lewis et al.,

1989). The majority of the literature on this issue, though, points to and supports the conflict/stress theory.

Forsyth and Eddington (1989) interviewed 37 Texas and Louisiana families who had experienced the boomerang phenomenon; mothers and their returning adult children were the interviewees. Among finding several common reasons for an adult child's return, the study also found that 28 of the parents had also "boomeranged" as adults while the other 9 parents had had siblings who had returned home. Another finding was that many mothers regarded their child's return as a failure on the part of both parent and child.

In another study that examined the impact of returning adult children, Glick and Lin (1986, p. 111) found that young adults who return after a period of absence and linger for a while "may find that personal relations in the family are not as cordial as they once were" and therefore creates stress within the family.

In summation, most of the literature is found in magazines and newspaper articles, which give only subjective viewpoints and general statistical information. Even the research literature is at times vague and lacks objectivity. No research studies were found that directly examined returning adult children and their influence on parents' marital satisfaction. The research literature is indirect and only presupposes the results on this issue based on prior theories.

Summary

In this chapter a literature review was provided that first examined the family life cycle theory and specifically the launching stage, along with a focus on variables which affect normal stage development. Then, the concept and measurement of marital

satisfaction was presented. Finally, the phenomenon of returning adult children was discussed, including some reasons for their return and potential areas of conflict.

The following chapter presents the research design including the methods and procedures used in the current study. This particular study will exceed former research studies by focusing directly, through existing measures of marital satisfaction, on the effects that adult children who return, remain, or leave home may have on their parents marital happiness within the context of the family life cycle.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study's purpose was to examine the effects that adult children who leave, stay, or return home have on their parents' reported happiness or unhappiness in the marriage relationship. In order to investigate this phenomenon, married couples with adult-aged children were sought to complete a questionnaire which contained the Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) Scale and the Marital Conventionalization Scale (MCS).

In this chapter an elaboration of the research design, including the sample selection, data collection procedures, human subjects guidelines, instrumentation, and methods of data analysis, will be presented.

Description and Selection of the Sample

The sample consisted of 77 married individuals who had their own children and/or stepchildren from previous marriages. The children had to be currently between 18 and 29 years of age in order to qualify for participation. The data obtained from individual husbands and wives were examined independently, and variations within a specific couple were not considered to be necessary for the present study.

Participants were recruited in a random fashion from three different sources. The first group was made up of volunteers from two church congregations, one Baptist church and the other an interdenominational church. Both were located in different districts of a large southwestern city. The second group contained volunteers from a large

metropolitan hospital in the same city, and the third group of volunteers came from nonspecific sources.

Data Collection Procedures

All participants were given a brief introduction to the study and some general information regarding what the researcher was observing, i.e., "the effect that adult children may have on marriage and family life." The volunteers from the interdenominational church group were recruited via the church bulletin and/or newsletter (Appendix A) before distributing the data collection device. All other participants were inducted through personal contact.

As indicated in a brief introduction on the questionnaire (Appendix B), participants had the right to withdraw at any time. If participants completed the questionnaire they gave voluntary consent for the usage of data in this study. Although the questionnaires were designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete, participants were asked to return them within a week or two so that they could be completed at home.

To ensure anonymity, questionnaires were collected in a box or in envelopes (with only the researcher's name printed on the front) at periodic times from each of the different locations of distribution. The study was conducted during the winter season.

Guidelines for Human Subjects Research

In order for this study to be carried out, specific guidelines on research with human subjects have been adhered to in accordance with the principles located in:

1. Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1973.

2. Code of Federal Regulation, Title 45, Subtitle A, Part 46, as currently issued. Care was taken to:
 - a. avoid causing injurious psychological, physical, or social effects on the subjects;
 - b. inform subjects as to the purpose of the study except when withholding information is essential to the investigation;
 - c. protect the volunteer status of the subjects; and
 - d. ensure that the subject's privacy is protected, or that they are anonymous, in the absence of authorization to do otherwise.

The questionnaire was submitted to the Committee for Research on Human Subjects at the University of Arizona for approval. A letter approving the present research study can be found in Appendix D.

Instrumentation

In the two identical questionnaires, one specifically addressed to the "husband" and one to the "wife," three demographic questions were first requested from participants: age, number of years married, and age(s) of children and/or stepchildren living with you now. Also in "Part I" (Appendix B) questions regarding the status of adult children who have either returned home, left home, or remained home, respectively, were asked questions including: When did the adult child return, leave, or when will they leave; was the marriage relationship satisfying before the respective event; and what reason(s) accounted for the adult child's presence at home. In "Part II," following the demographic data, participants were administered the Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) scale and the Marital Conventionalization Scale (MCS; Appendix C).

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

The KMS scale was the primary instrument used to measure marital satisfaction (Schumm et al., 1986). The KMS scale, as noted by Schumm, Milliken et al. (1983), could be used in situations in which marital satisfaction alone is the primary construct of interest rather than other areas that the other scales measure e.g. the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), etc. The KMS scale was designed by its authors to be a short and direct assessment of marital satisfaction (Sabetelli, 1988).

The KMS scale is based on the theoretical concept of Spanier and Cole (1976) which maintains a distinction between satisfaction with one's spouse, one's marriage, and marriage relationship as a whole. Thus, three items on the KMS scale are used to assess marital satisfaction: "How satisfied are you with your marriage . . . your (husband/wife) as a spouse . . . your relationship with your (husband/wife)?" (Schumm et al., 1986). The items have been used with a 4-, 5-, or 7-point Likert response scale, with the 7-point scale being the most popular. Responses range from extremely dissatisfied, Point 1 on the scale, to extremely satisfied, Point 7. Scoring is done on this paper-and-pencil test by simply adding the circled response score for each item giving a total between 3 and 21 points (Schumm, Anderson et al., 1985).

The KMS scale is usually incorporated in questionnaires, as was done for this study, and is applicable to nearly all populations of married couples. Extensive research has been done on the KMS scale in studies of both individuals and couples. The KMS scale has also been shown to be a statistically valid and reliable tool for measuring marital satisfaction.

Reliability

Internal consistency reliability for the KMS scale has been shown to have high Cronbach alpha estimates (Grover, Paff-Bergen, Russell, & Schumm, 1984; Schumm, Barnes et al., 1985; Schumm, Nichols Schectman, & Grigsby, 1983; Schumm, Scanlon et al., 1983). To evaluate internal consistency reliability, a study involving 79 married couples between the ages of 18 and 89 years were selected at random from a mid-western city and administered the KMS scale. Results yielded Cronbach alphas of .89 for husbands and .93 for wives (Schumm, Scanlon et al., 1983). In another study by Schumm, Barnes et al. (1985), Cronbach alphas of $\leq .84$ were found in sample sizes of less than 100 subjects and a Cronbach alpha of .96 was shown to occur in samples of larger than 200 subjects.

In a study by Mitchell et al. (1983) 106 married mothers involved in a nutrition education program participated in a test-retest of the KMS scale. Over a 10-week interval a reliability coefficient of .71 ($p < .001$) was found. The Cronbach alpha estimates in the same study were at .96 or greater. Further test-retest reliability coefficients were obtained from 10 couples in an evaluation of a marriage enrichment program over a 6-month period with $r = .72$ and $.62$ ($p < .001$) for husbands and wives respectively (Eggeman, Moxley, & Schumm, 1985).

Validity

Concurrent and discriminant validity has been supported in a study by Schumm, et al. (1986) by comparing the DAS (Spanier, 1976) and the Quality Marriage Index (QMI, Norton, 1983), two other reliable and valid measures of marital adjustment, to the KMS scale. A sample of 61 wives (urban and rural) was selected randomly as respondents to the three scales. These wives were between the ages of 30 and 64 years and had between zero

and four children living at home. Results show that the KMS scale correlated with the QMI and more strongly with a subscale of the DAS to meet requirements for concurrent validity, yet for discriminant validity requirements, "the KMS scale demonstrated no worse, if not better . . . than did the other two scales" (p. 385).

Criterion related validity was also found in a study involving 212 married females which attempted to distinguish eight recently separated "distressed" wives from the "nondistressed" sample; subjects were 17 to 91 years old (Schumm, Anderson et al., 1985). Results indicate that the mean score for the 212 married females was 17.29 while the eight separated wives had a mean score of 7.80. Only 81 of the married group scored a zero on a marital social desirability scale and their mean score on the KMS scale was 14.68. All eight of the separated females scored a zero on marital social desirability. Consequently, a significant difference was shown, which meets requirements for criterion validity.

Limitations

One problem which seems consistent in the KMS scale is that its distribution of responses departs significantly from normality in terms of skewness and kurtosis, although deviations are lower among subjects who score low on measures of marital social desirability (Schumm, Scanlon et al., 1983; Schumm, Nichols et al., 1983). Then, of course, another criticism involves the tendency for some subjects to respond in conventional or socially desirable ways to the KMS scale (Schumm et al., 1981). The MCS was included in the present study as a gauge for social desirability distortion.

The Marital Conventionalization Scale

Edmonds (1967, p. 681) designed a scale to measure marital conventionalization which is defined as "the extent to which a person distorts the appraisal of his marriage in the direction of social desirability." According to the author, a person's distortion toward social desirability is unconscious and unintentional. Since research subjects, in his study, knew that their responses would be completely anonymous, these individuals seemed only to deceive themselves rather than attempt to deceive others.

The hypothesis which inspired Edmonds' (1967) scale maintained that marital adjustment (satisfaction) scales are heavily contaminated by conventionalization. So, a sample consisting of 100 married students enrolled at Florida State University, during the summer and fall of 1965, were randomly selected and administered a paper-and-pencil test which contained 34 items discriminating social desirability and 16 neutral items asserting characteristics that can easily be found in any marriage. From these 50 items a short form of the MCS was devised which contained the 15 most discriminating items.

The present study utilized the short form. The 15 items contain conventional statements, in sentence form, which require a true (T) or false (F) response. Scores can range from 0 to 15, with zero being an indicator of low conventionality and 15 indicating high conventionality (Edmonds, 1967). T responses are scored for Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15; F responses are scored for Items 1, 2, 7, 9, and 11 (Edmonds, 1967).

Edmonds, Withers, and Dibatista (1972) guided their studies according to five main hypotheses that led to the formulation of the general marital conventionalization theory. The hypotheses, in summation, state that:

1. Universally, persons distort the appraisal of themselves in the direction of social desirability;
2. What individuals want to be true of themselves comes from prevailing social values;
3. These social values endorse strongly the attainment or projection of marital happiness;
4. The tendency is strong for persons to sway their assessment of marital happiness with a positive or socially desirable direction, and;
5. There is a positive association between conservatism and the phenomenon of distorted self-reports.

"The general theory is based largely upon introspections and observations of daily living . . ." (Edmonds et al., 1972).

Reliability

In the original study involving the Florida State University students, when correlating the short form (15 items) with the long form (34 weighted items), a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of $> .99$ was obtained for internal consistency reliability (Edmonds, 1967).

In another study (Edmonds et al., 1972), three samples were taken and compared to ascertain the extent to which the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959) is contaminated by marital conventionalization. The short form of the MCS and the MAT were administered to the 100 married Florida students, 152 married persons from Winchester, Virginia, and 40 married females from Williamsburg, Virginia;

all were selected at random. Correlation coefficients obtained at the .01 level were .63, .53, and .70, respectively.

There was also a significant correlation ($r = .78$) between the MCS and an index of religious activity and a moderate correlation ($r = .41$) between the same index and the MAT. This will be important to consider in the present study regarding the samples taken from the two churches.

And, finally, in a study by Schumm, Bollman, and Jurich (1981), the MCS was administered to 89 urban and 79 rural married couples randomly selected from two midwestern communities. Internal consistency reliability was found for the MCS with Cronbach alphas of .85 and .70 for urban husbands and wives respectively while coefficients of .72 and .59 were obtained for rural husbands and wives respectively. Marital conventionalization as related to marital satisfaction for both groups correlated significantly with $r = .53$, $p < .001$ in the rural sample and $r = .51$, $p < .001$ in the urban sample.

Validity

According to Edmonds' first study (1967), where a product-moment correlation coefficient of .99 was obtained between the long and short forms of the MCS, construct validity was claimed to have been confirmed. Also, content validity was established (Edmonds, 1967) in the context of the representative behavior sample of the 100 married Florida State students. Within the same study, the MCS was compared with the MMPI Lie Scale. A concurrent validity correlation coefficient of .44 was obtained for the long form (Edmonds, 1967). In Edmonds' study comparing the Locke-Wallace MAT with the MCS, the obtained correlation coefficients not only demonstrated reliability but also concurrent validity of the MCS.

In another study (Schumm et al., 1981), which investigated directly the validity of the MCS, correlational analysis failed to confirm the scale's construct validity. Even Edmonds questioned the scale's validity and whether the MCS is sufficiently sensitive to distortion at lower levels (Edmonds, 1967). It has, though, been recommended by Schumm et al. (1981) that it would be reasonable to use the Marital Conventionalization Scale as a control variable when studying marital satisfaction.

Limitations

The first obvious limitation of the MCS concerns the questionable association between the scale and conventionality. The construct validity of the MCS has not been verified in recent studies (Schumm et al., 1981; Schumm et al., 1982). The second limitation applying to the present study, involves results from a study by Schumm et al. (1972) that indicate that "religiosity is an important predictor of marital satisfaction" (p. 236) even if subjects do not respond in conventional ways to the MCS. Edmonds et al. (1972) had maintained that the relationship between religiosity and marital adjustment were artifacts of mutual contamination by marital conventionalization, yet their results gave only moderate support to this hypothesis. Finally, the MCS is limited, in this study, to being only a variable of control in comparing responses of social desirability to responses of marital satisfaction on the KMS scale.

Methods of Data Analysis

Each questionnaire was coded and entered into a data file so that respondents could be accounted for uniquely and individually. The data file included coded information

on demographics, status of adult children (Part I), and KMS scale and MCS items (Part II).

The data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA's, Pearson Correlations, Chi-squares, t tests, frequencies, descriptives, and cross-tabs in the SPSS-X program. Since the present study focused on parents whose adult children were categorized into one of three different situations, then three subgroups were identified as follows: returned home = RTN, departed from home = DPT, and remained at home = RMN. Therefore, data were examined between subgroups.

First, demographic information was categorized by way of cross-tabs and descriptives tables. Next, Hypothesis I was analyzed through one-way ANOVA's comparing each subgroup's scores on the KMS scale. Hypothesis II was then examined through a frequency distribution. Then, the "church" respondents were compared to the "other" respondents through a t test in an analysis of Hypothesis III. Finally, one-way Chi-square tests were conducted to determine possible differences in both the adult children's living situations and the number of males versus females within each subgroup. A Pearson Correlation was also performed between the KMS scale and the respondent variables.

Summary

In this chapter the methods and procedures used to implement this study were presented. A description of the population sample and the procedures for their selection were explained. A presentation of specific questionnaire distribution and data collection methods was given. The guidelines for conducting human subjects research were described. A detailed description of the research instruments, along with reliability and

validity statistics of the MCS and the KMS scales, was presented. And, lastly, methods of analyzing the data were discussed.

In the following chapter, the results of the present study are revealed based upon the hypotheses stated in Chapter 1 and in accordance with the research methods described in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects that adult children, in the launching stage of the family life cycle, may have on their parents' perceived marital satisfaction. Specifically, the focus was directed at parents whose adult children have returned home to live. Also, this study was designed to examine the reasons, according to parents, that adult children return or remain at home.

This chapter presents this study's research findings. A demographic description of the sample is cited initially, followed by an evaluation of each hypothesis. The first hypothesis is analyzed and discussed, along with the relationship between the two scales of marital satisfaction and conventionalization, in reference to the data obtained from the questionnaires. Then, the findings from the second hypothesis are given and compared. Next, the third hypothesis is analyzed. Finally, the results of other findings from the data are analyzed and presented.

Description of the Sample

Eighty-three questionnaires were completed and returned. However, 6 were discarded because the ages of the adult children were not within the 18 to 29 year old range. Therefore, the final sample size was 77. These were divided into nearly equal subgroups. The three subgroups consisted of 25 parents with returning (RTN) adult children, 26 parents with departed (DPT) adult children, and 26 parents with remaining

(RMN) adult children. When the first 72 questionnaires were received, minus the 6 rejects, there were 20 in subgroup RTN, 26 in subgroup DPT, and 26 in subgroup RMN. So, 5 more respondents were recruited in random fashion for subgroup RTN in order to have equal representation between subgroups. Also, there were 5 respondents who had both returning (RTN) and remaining (RMN) adult children; thus, data were obtained for 2 subgroups per each respondent.

Of the 77 respondents, 58% ($N = 45$) were recruited from 2 churches, 1 Baptist and 1 interdenominational congregation, both of which are located in different districts of a large southwestern city. The other 42% ($N = 32$) of the respondents were recruited from a large metropolitan hospital, a state university, and a private recreational center all located within the same southwestern city. The origin of the respondents, as represented in each of the three subgroups are as follows: "Church" respondents comprised 9 of the RTN subgroup, 17 of the DPT subgroup, and 19 of the RMN sub-group; "other" respondents comprised 16 of the RTNs, 9 of the DPTs, and 7 of the RMNs.

All respondents were married parents of adult-aged children. Males (husbands) accounted for 47% ($N = 36$) of the sample and females (wives) accounted for 53% ($N = 41$). The breakdown of spouses within each subgroup were: 11 husbands and 14 wives in the RTN subgroup, 11 husbands and 15 wives in the DPT subgroup, and 14 husbands and 12 wives in the RMN subgroup.

Age ranges for husbands in each of the subgroups were 36 to 62 years for RTNs, 45 to 58 years for DPTs, and 42 to 54 years for RMNs. The average age of husbands was 49 years, 51.9 years, and 48.2 years for the RTN, DPT, and RMN subgroups respectively. Wives ages ranged from 37 to 59 years for RTNs, 38 to 64 for DPTs, and 39 to 50 for

RMNs. The average age of wives was 47.4 years, 50.5 years, and 45.8 years for the RTN, DPT, and RMN subgroups, respectively.

The number of years individual spouses were married ranged between 2 to 34 years for the RTN, 5 to 35 years for the DPT, and 14 to 33 years for the RMN subgroups. The average length of marriage in each of the subgroups was 21.7 years for RTNs, 27.2 years for DPTs, and 24.8 years for RMNs. The modes for the same variable were 29 years, 28 years, and 27 years for the RTN, DPT, and RMN subgroups, respectively. Finally, the medians for years married were 26, 28, and 26 in the RTN, DPT, and RMN subgroups, respectively. The respondents' demographic data are represented in Table 1.

The number of adult children in each of the subgroups were 53 RTNs, 45 DPTs, and 43 RMNs, giving a total of 141 respective adult children "affecting" 77 parents. Of the total ($N = 141$): 48% ($N = 68$) were males, 47% ($N = 66$) were females and 5% ($N = 7$) were unknown. In the RTN subgroup there were 18 male, 34 female, and one unknown adult children, while the DPT and RMN subgroups had 23 male/16 female/6 unknown and 27 male/16 female adult children ratios respectively.

The age range of adult children in each of the subgroups was 19 to 29 years for the RTNs and 18 to 24 years for the RMNs. There were also other children in some homes of the RTN subgroup ranging from 12 to 17 years of age and the RMN subgroup had children between 16 and 17 years old. The average age of adult children was 24 years and 20.2 years for RTNs and RMNs, respectively. Data on the ages of the DPT subgroup were not obtained; although, due to the qualifications for participation, the age range for the DPTs should have been 18 to 29 years. Demographic data for the respondents' adult children are represented in Table 2.

Table 1. Demographic representation of the respondents

Variable	Subgroup			Total	
	RTN	DPT	RMN		
Number of Respondents	25	26	26	77	
Origin					
Church	9	17	19	45	
Other	16	9	7	32	
Sex					
Males (husband)	11	11	14	36	
Females (wives)	14	15	12	41	
Ages					
Husbands	Range	36-62	45-58	42-54	---
	Mean	49	51.9	48.2	---
Wives	Range	37-59	38-64	39-50	---
	Mean	47.4	50.5	45.8	---
Years Married					
	Range	2-34	5-35	14-33	---
	Mean	21.7	27.2	24.8	---
	Mode	29	28	27	---
	Median	26	28	26	---

Table 2. Demographic representation of the respondents' adult children

Variable	Subgroup			Total
	RTN	DPT	RMN	
Number of Adult Children	53	45	43	141
Sex of Adult Children				
Males	18	23	27	68
Females	34	16	16	66
Unknown	1	6	0	7
Ages of Adult Children Living at Home				
Range	19-29	N/A	18-24	---
Mean	24	N/A	20.2	---

Findings of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The first research question investigated in this study was as follows:

Is there a significant difference in reported marital satisfaction scores between parents who have adult children that have returned home versus those whose adult children have either remained or left home?

The KMS scale (Schumm et al., 1983) was the main instrument used to make this assessment. The MCS (Edmonds, 1967) was also used, but only to assess social desirability distortion. In order to test the first research question, a one-way analysis of variance

(ANOVA) of the marital satisfaction scores was conducted comparing the three subgroups. The findings show no significant differences between the RTN, DPT, and RMN subgroups on the KMS and MCS totals (Table 3).

The results show high marital satisfaction scores and moderate marital conventionalization scores for all three subgroups. The mean (\pm S.E.) KMS scale scores for the RTN, DPT, and RMN subgroups were 18.76 (\pm .55), 17.88 (\pm .80), and 17.84 (\pm .56), respectively. Also, the mean (\pm S.E.) MCS scores for the RTN, DPT, and RMN subgroups were 7.04 (\pm .94), 6.38 (\pm .95), and 5.27 (\pm .84), respectively. Therefore, it

Table 3. Comparison of Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale scores and Marital Conventionalization Scale scores between parents of returning (RTN), departing (DPT), and remaining (RMN) adult children

Subgroup									
RTN			DPT			RMN			
Range	Mean	S.E.	Range	Mean	S.E.	Range	Mean	S.E.	
Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale									
11-21	18.76	.55	5-21	17.88	.80	9-21	17.84	.56	
Marital Conventionalization Scale									
0-14	7.04	.94	0-15	6.38	.95	0-15	5.27	.84	

would appear that the answer to Hypothesis 1, based on the findings from the available data, is that parents whose adult children have returned home to live, departed from home, and remained at home do not differ in their reports of marital satisfaction and marital conventionalization as measured by the KMS and the MCS.

Hypothesis 2

The second research question in this study was as follows:

For what reasons, from the parents' perspective, do adult children return or remain at home?

Part I of the questionnaire, which was divided into three sections (RTN, DPT, and RMN subgroups), listed 12 possible reasons for which an adult child had returned, might return, or has remained at home. Table 4 gives a list of the 12 "reasons" in the order that they were given on the questionnaire along with the number of responses, corresponding percentages, and totals for each subgroup and each subgroup combined. The findings for the RTN subgroup show that 53 adult children returned home, according to 25 parents, for the following reasons: 30.2% ($N = 16$) due to financial problems, 15.1% ($N = 8$) due to divorce or separation, 9.4% ($N = 5$) due to completion of college (term or career), 9.4% ($N = 5$) due to job termination, 7.5% ($N = 4$) due to respondents' wants or needs, 7.5% ($N = 4$) due to the wants or needs of respondents' spouse, 7.5% ($N = 4$) due to mental or emotional problems 5.8% ($N = 3$) due to "other" reasons, 3.8% ($N = 2$) due to eviction or end of lease, and 3.8% ($N = 2$) due to drug or alcohol problems. See the histogram in Figure 1 for a representation of these findings. No adult children returned for reasons of injury or sickness or completion of the armed forces.

Table 4. Reasons adult children return, may return, or remain home according to their parents

Factor	Subgroup						Total	
	RTN		DPT		RMN		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
College	5	9.4	3	6.7	24	55.8*	32	22.7
Eviction	2	3.8	1	2.2	N/A	N/A	3	2.1
Drugs/Alcohol	2	3.8	0	0	1	2.3	3	2.1
Financial Problems	16	30.2*	10	22.2*	11	25.6	37	26.2*
Injury/Sickness	0	0	6	13.3	0	0	6	4.3
Divorce/Separation	8	15.1	8	17.8	0	0	16	11.3
"I" Want/Need Them	4	7.5	1	2.2	0	0	5	3.6
"My Spouse" Wants/ Needs Them	4	7.5	0	0	0	0	4	2.8
Job Termination	5	9.4	2	4.5	1	2.3	8	5.7
Armed Forces	0	0	1	2.2	3	7.0	4	2.8
Mental/Emotional Problems	4	7.5	1	2.2	1	2.3	6	4.3
Other	3	5.8	2	4.5	2	4.7	7	5.0
No Response	0	0	10	22.2	0	0	10	7.1
Total	53	100.0	45	100.0	43	100.0	141	100.0

*Indicates primary factor.

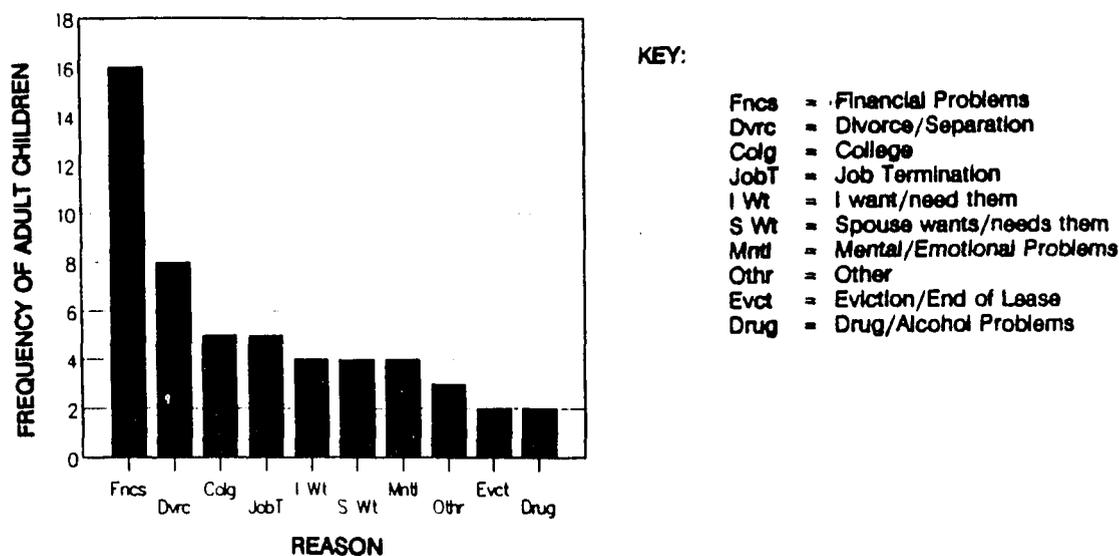


Figure 1. Distribution of reasons adult children return home

The findings for the DPT subgroup show that 45 adult children might return home, according to 26 parents, for the following reasons: 22.2% ($N = 10$) due to financial problems; 17.8% ($N = 8$) due to divorce or separation; 13.3% ($N = 6$) due to injury, sickness, or other physical problems; 6.7% ($N = 3$) due to completion of college (term or career); 4.5% ($N = 2$) due to job termination; 4.5% ($N = 2$) due to "other" reasons; 2.2% ($N = 1$) due to eviction or end of lease; 2.2% ($N = 1$) due to respondent's wants or needs; 2.2% ($N = 1$) due to completion of the armed forces; and 2.2% ($N = 1$) due to mental or emotional problems. See Figure 2 for this representation. Adult children might not return home, again according to this data, due to drug or alcohol problems. There

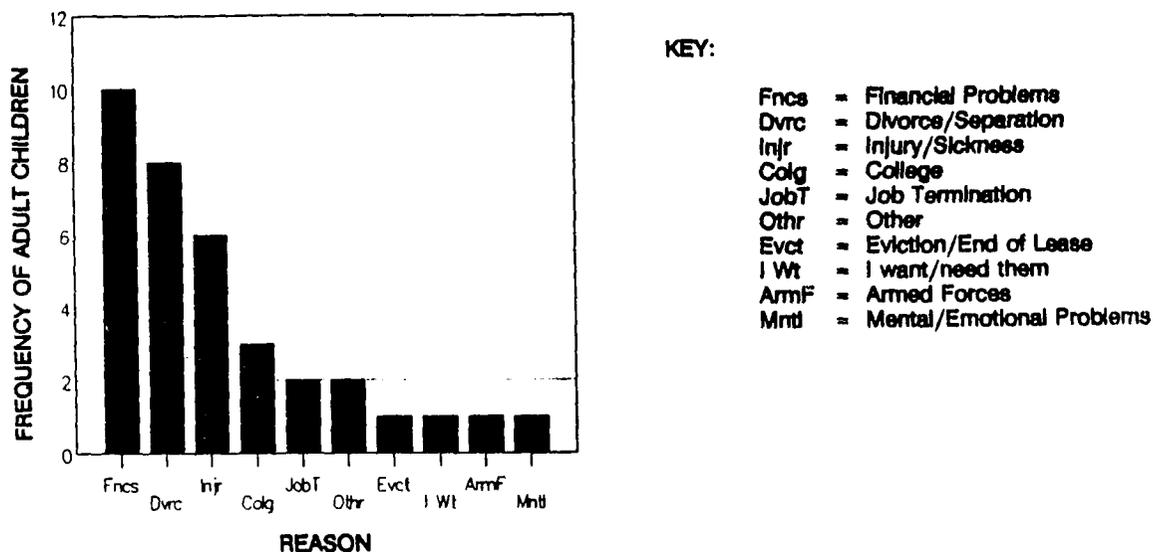


Figure 2. Distribution of reasons adult children might return

were 7 respondents in this subgroup, with 10 adult children, who did not respond to the "reasons" section which accounted for a 22.2% lack of information in the total sample.

The findings for the RMN subgroup show that 43 adult children have remained at home, according to 26 parents, for the following reasons: 55.8% ($N = 24$) due to college attendance, 25.6% ($N = 11$) due to financial problems, 7% ($N = 3$) due to the armed forces, 4.7% ($N = 2$) due to other reasons, 2.3% ($N = 1$) due to job termination and 2.3% ($N = 1$) due to mental or emotional problems. See Figure 3 for this representation. There were no adult children staying home for reasons of injury or sickness, divorce or separation, nor because the respondent, and/or spouse wanted or needed them home.

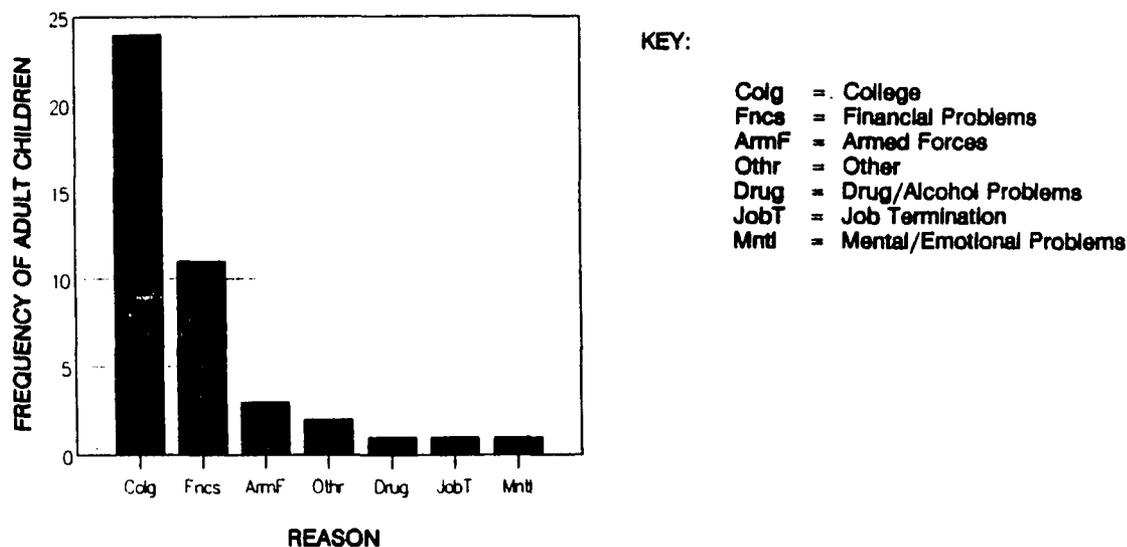


Figure 3. Distribution of reasons adult children remain home

When comparing the findings of all three subgroups, the reasons for which 141 adult children live, or may live, with their parents are as follows: 26.2% ($N = 37$) due to financial problems, 22.7% ($N = 32$) due to completion or attendance at college, 11.3% ($N = 16$) due to divorce or separation, 5.7% ($N = 8$) due to job termination, 5% ($N = 7$) due to some "other" reasons, 4.3% ($N = 6$) due to injury, sickness or other physical problem, 4.3% ($N = 6$) due to mental or emotional problems, 3.6% ($N = 5$) due to respondents' wants or needs, 2.8% ($N = 4$) due to the wants or needs or respondents' spouses, 2.8% ($N = 4$) due to completion or enlistment in the armed forces, 2.1% ($N = 3$) due to eviction or end of lease, and 2.1% ($N = 3$) due to drug or alcohol problems. See Figure 4 for the histogram representation of these totals.

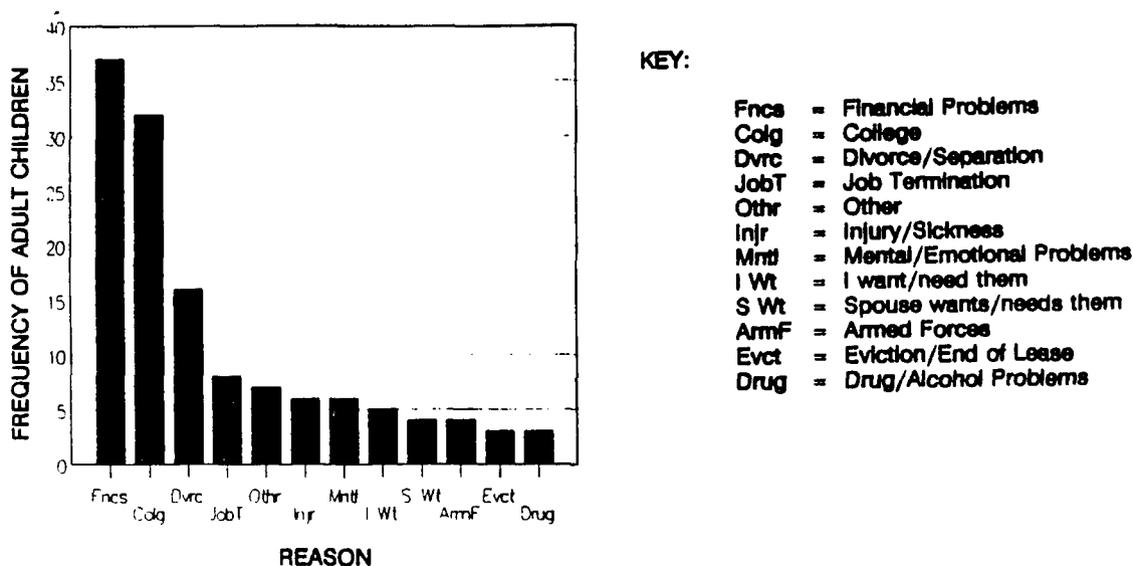


Figure 4. Distribution of reasons adult children live, or may live, at home overall

Many of the respondents completed more than one item from the list of 12 possible reasons indicating that adult children return, depart from, or remain at home for not only a variety of reasons but also for reasons combined. Regarding the "other" responses, parents in the RTN and DPT subgroups listed "single parenthood" or "difficulties with roommate" as reasons for return or possible return. In the RMN subgroup, "mental retardation" was listed as the "other" reason that one adult child remained at home. Since most of the respondents within the total sample of husbands and wives were married couples, many of the responses of the responses referring to one respondent's adult children were duplicated by his or her spouse. Therefore, the total number of adult children does not represent 141 different individuals.

Hypothesis 3

The third research question investigated in this study was as follows:

Is there a significant difference in reported marital satisfaction scores between respondents from "church" groups versus "other" groups?

There were 45 respondents sampled from two different churches and 32 respondents gathered from various other locations (a hospital, a university, etc.). As in Hypothesis 1, the KMS scale was the primary instrument measuring marital satisfaction, followed by the MCS which was used to assess social desirability distortion. A t test was conducted to analyze the differences of obtained satisfaction and conventionalization scores between the two groups of origin. The findings show no significant differences between the "church" group and the "other" group on KMS and MCS totals (Table 5).

Table 5. Comparison of Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale scores and Marital Conventionalization Scale scores between groups of sample origin: "church" vs. "other"

Church Group			Other Group			t value	Probability
<u>N</u>	Mean	S.E.	<u>N</u>	Mean	S.E.		
Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale							
45	18.69	.44	45	17.41	.63	1.73	.089
Marital Conventionalization Scale							
32	6.36	.72	32	6.03	.77	.30	.763

The results show high marital satisfaction scores and moderate marital conventionalization scores for both groups of origin. The mean (\pm S.E.) KMS scores for the "church" group and the "other" group were 18.69 (\pm .44) and 17.41 (\pm .63), respectively. The mean (\pm S.E.) MCS scores for the "church" and the "other" groups were 6.36 (\pm .72) and 6.03 (\pm .77), respectively. It would appear, based on these findings, that spouses from church congregations do not differ from spouses sampled within other institutions in reported marital satisfaction/conventionalization as measured by the KMS and the MCS.

Additional Findings

Some further tests were conducted on the two respondent groups ("church" and "other") in order to determine possible differences in the living situations (RTN, DPT, or RMN) of their adult children. Table 1 shows the number of respondents from the two groups of origin within each of the three adult children subgroups. These data were analyzed using one-way Chi-square tests (Linton & Gallo, 1975) to compare the two groups of origin within each subgroup (RTN, DPT, and RMN). These analyses indicated that there were no significant differences in number of respondents between the "church" and "other" groups for the RTN and DPT subgroups. However, a significantly larger number of respondents from the "church" group had adult children that remained at home ($\chi^2 = 4.65$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$).

One-way Chi-square tests were also conducted on the sexes of the adult children as represented within each of the three subgroups to determine possible differences. Table 2 shows the number of males and females within each subgroup (RTN, DPT, and RMN). These data were analyzed using one-way Chi-square tests to compare the two sexes. These analyses indicated that there were no significant differences in number of males and

females within the DPT and RMN subgroups. However a significantly larger number of females returned home than did males within the RTN subgroup ($\chi^2 = 4.32, p < .05$).

Finally, a Pearson Correlation was performed between the KMS scale scores and the respondents' length of marriage, age, and children present. These analyses indicated that there were no significant differences between each of the three variables (length of marriage, age, and presence of children) and marital satisfaction as measured by the KMS scale.

Summary

This chapter examined and analyzed relevant findings of the present study. All three hypotheses were addressed through statistical analyses and/or specific examinations and then discussed with regard to the adult children subgroups as well as the groups of origin. The analysis of the data did not substantiate Hypothesis 1 nor Hypothesis 3; no significant differences were found. However, Hypothesis 2 revealed much information as did the other analyses of additional findings. The following chapter will present this study's conclusions and implications as related to the findings.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The intent of this study was to examine the effects that adult children who have previously returned home to reside have on their parents' marital satisfaction. This was done by comparing parents of returning adult children to parents whose adult children have either left home or remained at home in reference to their respective marital satisfaction scores as measured primarily by the KMS scale. Also, this study observed various factors which might contribute to an adult child's return, possible return in the future, or stay at home. According to previous literature, there could be negative effects produced by a disruption in the family life cycle on parental satisfaction in marriage as adult children return home (Anderson et al., 1983; Carter & McGoldrick 1988; Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Glick & Lin, 1986).

This chapter first presents an overview of the research, along with a summary of the participant sample. Then, conclusions of the hypotheses and other findings are made. Finally, some implications and limitations of the study's findings are discussed, followed by recommendations for further research.

Overview of the Research

The principal investigator of this study found that, after an extensive review of the literature, there is limited information regarding "boomerang kids" (adult children who return home to live) and no direct research studies relating marital satisfaction to this

phenomenon. Actually, in literature specific to this topic, theories about the effects on marital satisfaction were made based upon empirical research and only "tested" through personal interviews with parents (Forsyth & Eddington, 1989; Okimoto & Stegall, 1987) or found in spurious comments on questionnaires (Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Lewis et al., 1989). No objective statistical findings regarding boomerang kids' effects on parent marital satisfaction were presented. Therefore, the first research question asked whether or not returning adult children do affect the marital satisfaction of their parents.

Respondents Sampled

The majority of the questionnaires returned were completed properly and, therefore, were useable. A total of 77 parents/spouses with adult-aged children made up the three subgroups. The subgroups, parents whose adult children either returned (RTN), departed (DPT) from, or remained (RMN) at home, had equal representation of respondents in each. In order to obtain some generalizability, participants were recruited from a variety of sources--two churches, a hospital, a university, and a fitness center. The sample characteristics of the respondents represented various ages and lengths of marriage. Likewise, there seemed to be a good balance of husbands and wives sampled along with a nearly equal representation of genders, ages, and number of adult children that each parent acknowledged, via questionnaire, overall ($N = 141$ adult children).

Measurement Device

The first part of the questionnaire drew specific demographical information from the respondents pertaining to sex, age, length of marriage, number of children or stepchildren, as well as the adult children's living situation (RTN, etc.), sexes, and ages.

Also, a retrospective estimate of the respondents' marital satisfaction was obtained along with a forecast as to when the adult children will leave or might return. Finally, a list of possible reasons for an adult child's presence at home elicited a frequency distribution.

The second part of the questionnaire employed the use of the Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) scale, which is a well-researched and brief 3-item survey used to measure individual marital satisfaction. This measure was followed by the Marital Conventionalization Scale (MCS), a widely used 15-item survey used to measure social desirability distortion. The MCS was used in concert with the KMS scale as a control variable to check respondents' scores against possible distortion.

Conclusions

Hypothesis 1

The first research question attempted to show a difference in parent marital satisfaction between three unique situations involving the presence or absence of adult children. Specifically, the marriage relationships of parents whose adult children have returned home to live were analyzed in relation to two other subgroups of parents whose adult children have either remained at home or have all left home. Hypothesis 1 was based on the assumption that returning adult children would affect parent marital satisfaction in a negative direction according to previous literature.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted on both the KMS and MCS scores for respondents between each of the three subgroups. The results did not support this hypothesis. In other words, the marital satisfaction of parents with "boomerang kids" was no different than the marital satisfaction of parents whose adult children have all departed from or remained at home. It is important to note that in all three subgroups the marital

satisfaction scores, as measured by the KMS scale, were high (total mean was 18.16 in a range of 3 to 21) and that the social desirability distortion was in the moderate range (total mean was 6.22 in a range of 0 to 15) as measured by the MCS.

Generally, these findings would seem to support the curvilinear model (Anderson et al., 1983; Rollins & Cannon, 1974; Schram, 1979; Spanier et al., 1975) in that marital satisfaction is at a high point following the launching stage. However, the findings tend also to be in contrast to the curvilinear model as interpreted by Deutscher (1964) and Glen (1975) which maintains that the absence of adult children allows for greater marital freedoms and thus greater marital satisfaction. Overall, the curvilinear model bases its theory on the absence, due to launching, of adult children having a positive effect on parent marital satisfaction. This study's findings, though, showed no differences between the marital satisfaction reports from parents with adult children present and parents without.

Another conclusion which can be drawn from the present study's results relates to the conflict/stress theory (Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Glick & Lin, 1986; Hill, 1958; Young, 1984) which supports the notion that an adult child's return home causes conflict, adds stress, produces relational friction, and places strain upon marital relationships and parent-child interactions. The findings, from the research methods used in this study, do not support the conflict/stress theory but, instead, may tend to support the studies by Suitor and Pillemer (1988) and Lewis et al. (1989) which report that adult children live quite harmoniously with their parents and may be a "blessing" to parents. Yet, these conclusions can only be implied indirectly since the findings were not significantly different.

Hypothesis 2

The second research question explored the reasons for which adult children had returned, may return, and have remained at home. The second hypothesis assumed that adult children returned or remained at home for more than just financial reasons. A frequency distribution was used to examine the data from the checklist of 12 possible reasons, under each of the three subgroups, as found in Part 1 of the questionnaire.

The results showed that, for the RTN subgroup, adult children are returning home mostly due to their own financial problems. This supports the current research findings (Bane, 1976; Clemens & Axelson, 1985; Forsyth & Eddington, 1989). At least 30% (N = 16) of the 53 adult children represented in the RTN subgroup came back home to live with their parents because of financial difficulties.

In addition, the results of the frequency distribution revealed that the second highest factor contributing to an adult child's return is due to the divorce or separation of one's spouse. Okimoto and Stegall (1987) made reference to this factor. The present study showed that about 15%, 8 of 53, of adult children returned home just after severing their marital relationships.

Other reasons for return included the completion of a college career or term, the termination of a job, and others. Also, a few struggling single mothers have returned home, as indicated by at least 3 out of 25 respondents. It is noteworthy that at least 8 parents out of 50 (25 respondents plus each of their spouses) "wanted" or "needed" their adult children to come back home. A "want" may refer to permission given for return; yet, a "need" is hard to define with the limited data received. Conclusions, here, can only be

speculated. Maybe there are problems with independence or co-dependence, or there are family crises.

For the DPT subgroup, the findings seem to be consistent with the RTN subgroup regarding the major reasons for an adult child's return or possible return. The checklist of factors was included in the DPT subgroup to observe whether parents anticipated, expected, or did not expect their adult children to return to the "empty nest" and for what reasons might these children return if they did. Only 7 out of 25 respondents did not complete this checklist. Therefore, a majority of parents in this study at least considered that their adult children might, or even would, return to live with them at some point in the future.

Finally, findings for the RMN subgroup revealed that the major reason that adult children remained at home was because of college attendance. Results show 56%, or 24 out of 43, of adult children lived in the homes of their parents while attending college. This could be supported by the fact that the respondents were gathered from a city which contained a large state university student population. A speculation is that it is cheaper and more convenient to live at home while going to college than to live away from home (in an apartment, dormitory, etc.). The other reasons that adult children remained at home included the child's financial problem, which was the next highest at 14% ($N = 6$), and so on.

Combining the findings of all three subgroups reveals responses to all 12 of the items in the "reasons checklist." The frequency distribution reveals an adult child's financial problems as the main factor contributing to his or her presence at home, followed by attendance or completion of college, divorce or separation, and so on.

The findings for all three subgroups are based upon an individual respondent's perception of the reasons that an adult child returns, may return, or remains at home. In other words, it is from the parents' point of view that "the reasons" are identified. If the adult children themselves had responded to the checklist, the outcome may have been different due to the different perspectives.

Hypothesis 3

The third research question sought to observe the possible difference between parents obtained from church groups and parents obtained from other institutions in relation to their satisfaction in marriage. Hypothesis 3 assumed that the marital satisfaction of parents within Christian church congregations would be greater than the marital satisfaction of parents found in other places.

A t test was done on both the KMS and MCS scores of the respondents between each group; 45 "church" respondents versus 32 "other" respondents. The results did not support the hypothesis. This means that the marital satisfaction of parents from "church" groups was no different than the marital satisfaction of parents from "other" groups.

These findings do not support Schumm, Bollman, and Jurich's (1982) results which indicate that religiosity and/or church attendance are important predictors of marital satisfaction. The KMS scores for the "church" group should have been higher than the "other" group's scores. However, it is not known how many of the "other" group respondents attended church also.

Therefore, the present findings for this research question could only support the notion that all 77 respondents have some generalizability across different institutions, within the same city, since the outcome of their scores are similar.

Additional Findings

In a further analysis of the demographic data, a significant difference was found between the "church" group and the "other" group within the RMN subgroup. A one-way Chi-square test revealed that there are more respondents with adult children remaining at home than "other" respondents. This may indicate that adult children are launched at a later time from the homes of parents who attend church; yet, information on religiosity and its effects upon the family life cycle is sparse, so this is merely a speculation.

Analyzing the gender differences within each of the three subgroups reveals a significant difference between males and females in the RTN subgroup. A one-way Chi-square test showed that there are a larger number of females returning home to live than males. Recent literature (Giges, 1987; Okimoto & Stegall, 1987) seems to indicate the opposite trend, maintaining that more males return home than females. The previous literature's statistics, though, focused primarily on the total number of males versus females within the home regardless of their status (returning or remaining). Therefore, the present findings of this study reveal new information specific to the various subgroups or home situations of adult children.

Finally, a Pearson Correlation was conducted to analyze possible differences between marital satisfaction, as measured by the KMS scale, and respondent's age, length of marriage, and presence of children. The coefficients revealed no significant correlations between KMS scores and each of the three aforementioned criteria. According to the research literature (Anderson et al., 1983; Nock, 1979; Spanier et al., 1979) age, length of marriage, and presence and/or number of children are significant predictors of marital satisfaction. This study's findings do not support the conclusions found in previous research.

Implications and Treatment

When examining the results of this study, there are only a few findings of some importance that could be used productively in counseling situations with married parents who have adult-aged children. Basically, the findings will be most helpful to parents and their adult children when used as educational tools. The results of this study could bring about more of an awareness of the "boomerang" phenomenon, thus, creating more understanding. Also, potential or current conflicts could be avoided or understood allowing for change in light of this increasing phenomenon.

For example, when the knowledge that financial struggles are in store for adult children living away from home, parents and their adult children may decide to invest more in the future, i.e., building a savings account, maintaining a college fund, exploring advantageous career fields, etc. Knowing also that their daughters are more likely to return than their sons, parents can be more prepared to deal with this occurrence without being surprised; unexpectedness can create more stress (Hill, 1958, Lewis et al., 1989).

Of the 141 adult children represented, a total of 96 have either returned home or remain at home. In reference to the 77 respondents, 66% ($N = 51$) of the parents with adult children have at least one adult child at home with them and the other 26 parents may, at some point in the future have their adult children home with them. Being made aware of this fact may prepare parents for a phenomenon many seem to be unaware of prior to its occurrence. Adult children, as well, should be informed, which may motivate them to strive for greater independence or, as parents should beware of, encourage them to maintain their dependence on Mom and Dad.

Limitations

Due to the relatively few significant findings in this study, there were some limitations which affected or may have affected the outcomes. The first, most obvious, limitation was the relatively small sample size ($N = 77$). Significant findings may have been produced with a larger participant sample. Secondly, randomness was moderate. Therefore, a completely random sample including individuals with dissatisfying marriages, different socioeconomic levels, and wider ethnic variations may have yielded more significant results and greater generalizability.

Third, only individual spouses reports of marital satisfaction were analyzed. There may have been significant differences between husbands and wives within individual couples as related to their adult children's presence or absence. Fourth, social desirability distortion was found to be at a moderate level in the present study. If respondents with low conventionalization scores were analyzed, the findings may have been significant. Yet, the "conventionalization argument" has its own limitations.

Finally, and most importantly, respondents' marital satisfaction may have been influenced by factors other than the presence or absence of their adult children. Intake procedures (questionnaires, etc.) may need to be more pervasive in order to differentiate extraneous influences thereby pinpointing the causes for marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Recommendations for Further Research

Since few discernable differences were found in this study and since, according to recent literature, the issue of parent marital satisfaction as influenced by the return of adult children is of great interest, then research on this topic must be more determinate

and concrete. For instance, the launching stage of the family life cycle is the transition point of interest, and transitions involve adjustments. Therefore, a study similar to the present investigation could analyze marital adjustment rather than marital satisfaction by using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) in place of the KMS scale.

Another study could examine an individual's satisfaction as a parent against his or her marital satisfaction. One may find that although marital satisfaction may be high, parenting satisfaction may be conversely low due to feelings of failure or inadequacy, on the part of parents, to successfully launch their children. The principal investigator of the current study found only two potentially useful scales of parenting satisfaction, so a scale may need to be devised.

If a replication of the present study is conducted, a few considerations for change should be taken into account. The questionnaire should be refined in order to promote greater ease of response and more usable data. The questions assessing the anticipation of an adult child's launch or return (Section A, #3; Section B, #2; Section C, #1) yielded information with limited usability. The questions examining a "retrospective estimate" of one's Marital satisfaction (Section A, #4; Section B, #3; Section C, #2) also yielded limited findings with no significant differences. Instead, for example, a question assessing whether or not the respondents/parents themselves had "boomeranged" as adult children might be appropriate to ascertain a "return cycle."

Finally, when replicating this research, the limitations of the present study need to be observed and altered for a greater probability of encountering significant results. Limitations to be considered include: increasing the sample size, increasing random

selection, analyzing differences between individual couples, and, most importantly, differentiating extraneous factors that influence marital satisfaction.

Summary

Chapter 5 first presented an overview of the research including respondent information and measurement devices used. Then, the three main hypotheses investigated in this study were discussed. The results showed that for Hypotheses 1 and 3, no significant differences were found, thus, not lending support to previous literature. Next, the results of the second hypothesis were examined and elaborated upon, followed by the results of additional findings obtained from the gathered data. Finally, implications of the findings, possibilities for treatment, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research are considered and presented.

Adult-aged children are returning home, or staying home, in increasing numbers due to financial problems, divorce, college, etc., and oftentimes for reasons combined. This phenomenon has thus lengthened and even redefined the launching stage of the family life cycle. In spite of this growing trend, the parents of these adult children seem to have continued satisfaction in their marriage relationships. According to the present study, parent marital happiness is not disputed by the enduring presence of their adult children.

APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT DEVICE

ATTENTION PARENTS: If you are married and have adult children between the ages of 18 to 39 years of age, please stop by the table in front of the worship Center before or after either service and pick up a short survey. This is not a CCC-sponsored project, but your participation will help contribute to a better understanding of families with adult children. The data will be used in Chad A. Bledsoe's masters thesis (Chad is being supervised by Glynn Laing for a counseling internship here at CCC). Your identity will remain anonymous. The survey should be filled out as soon as possible and returned to the table. Thanks for your help.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART I

Dear Husband,

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your identity will remain anonymous and all reported information will be grouped. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and should be returned as soon as possible. You have the right not to answer the questions and to withdraw at any time.

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the effect that adult children (between 18 and 29 years of age) may have on marriage and family life. Please answer the questions based on how you feel at the present time.

All information obtained will be used by Chad A. Bledsoe for a master's thesis in counseling at the University of Arizona. By your completion of this survey you give voluntary consent to the above stated purpose.

Part I. Biographical Survey

Age _____ Number of years married _____

Age(s) of children and/or stepchildren living with you now? _____

(Key for A, B, and C: S = son D = daughter SS = stepson SD = stepdaughter)

A. If you have adult children who have left home for some time and have returned home again to live, please answer the following questions; otherwise skip to B on the next page.

1. How long was your adult child(ren) away from home before returning?

S _____ D _____ SS _____ SD _____

2. How long has your adult child(ren) been home since returning?

S _____ D _____ SS _____ SD _____

3. When do you anticipate that your adult child(ren) will leave?

Never ___ I don't know ___ Probably within ___ (how many) years.

4. Was your marriage relationship satisfying before your adult child(ren) returned home? Yes ___ No ___ No difference ___

5. What events, in their lives, preceded the return of your adult children?

(Circle those items which apply and put S, D, SS, or SD in the space provided.)

Examples: Mental / emotional problems SS or Mental / emotional problems S, 2-SD

College / other schooling _____ Termination of job / career _____

Eviction / end of lease / other _____ Armed Forces _____

Drug / alcohol problems _____ Mental / emotional problems _____

Financial problems: yours / wife's / adult child's _____

Injury / sickness / other physical problems _____

Divorce / separation / death of spouse _____

You wanted / needed them back home _____

My wife wanted / needed them back home _____

Other _____

B. If all of your adult children live away from home, please answer the following questions; otherwise skip to C.

1. How long has it been since your last adult child left home?

S _____ D _____ SS _____ SD _____

2. Do you anticipate that your adult child(ren) . . .

will return ___ may return ___ will not return ___.

3. Was your marriage relationship satisfying before your adult child(ren) left home? Yes ___ No ___ No difference ___.

4. If your adult children return, what would, in your guess, be the most likely reason(s)? (Circle those items which apply and put S, D, SS, or SD in the space provided.)

Examples: (Mental) / emotional problems SS or Mental / (emotional) problems S, 2-SD

College / other schooling _____ Termination of job / career _____

Eviction / end of lease / other _____ Armed Forces _____

Drug / alcohol problems _____ Mental / emotional problems _____

Financial problems: yours / wife's / adult child's _____

Injury / sickness / other physical problems _____

Divorce / separation / death of spouse _____

You wanted / needed them back home _____

My wife wanted / needed them back home _____

Other _____

C. If you have adult children who have always lived at home (they've never left), please answer the following questions.

1. When do you anticipate that your adult child(ren) will leave?

Never ___ I don't know ___ Probably within ___ (how many) years.

2. Was your marriage relationship satisfying before your child(ren)

became an adult? Yes ___ No ___ No difference ___.

3. For what reasons, in their lives, are your adult children still living at home? (Circle those items which apply and put S, D, SS, or SD in the space provided.)

Examples: (Mental) / emotional problems SS or Mental / (emotional) problems S, 2-SD

College / other schooling _____ Termination of job / career _____

Divorce / separation / death of spouse _____ Armed Forces _____

Drug / alcohol problems _____ Mental / emotional problems _____

Financial problems: yours / spouse's / adult child's _____

Injury / sickness / other physical problems _____

You wanted / needed them back home _____

My wife wanted / needed them back home _____

Other _____

Dear Wife,

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your identity will remain anonymous and all reported information will be grouped. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and should be returned as soon as possible. You have the right not to answer the questions and to withdraw at any time.

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the effect that adult children (between 18 and 29 years of age) may have on marriage and family life. Please answer the questions based on how you feel at the present time.

All information obtained will be used by Chad A. Bledsoe for a master's thesis in counseling at the University of Arizona. By your completion of this survey you give voluntary consent to the above stated purpose.

Part I. Biographical Survey

Age ____ Number of years married ____

Age(s) of children and/or stepchildren living with you now? _____

(Key for A, B, and C: S = son D = daughter SS = stepson SD = stepdaughter)

A. If you have adult children who have left home for some time and have returned home again to live, please answer the following questions; otherwise skip to B on the next page.

1. How long was your adult child(ren) away from home before returning?

S _____ D _____ SS _____ SD _____

2. How long has your adult child(ren) been home since returning?

S _____ D _____ SS _____ SD _____

3. When do you anticipate that your adult child(ren) will leave?

Never ___ I don't know ___ Probably within ___ (how many) years.

4. Was your marriage relationship satisfying before your adult child(ren) returned home? Yes ___ No ___ No difference ___.

5. What events, in their lives, preceded the return of your adult children?

(Circle those items which apply and put S, D, SS, or SD in the space provided.)

Examples: Mental / emotional problems SS or Mental / emotional problems S, 2-SD

College / other schooling _____ Termination of job / career _____

Eviction / end of lease / other _____ Armed Forces _____

Drug / alcohol problems _____ Mental / emotional problems _____

Financial problems: yours / husband's / adult child's _____

Injury / sickness / other physical problems _____

Divorce / separation / death of spouse _____

You wanted / needed them back home _____

My husband wanted / needed them back home _____

Other _____

B. If all of your adult children live away from home, please answer the following questions; otherwise skip to C.

1. How long has it been since your last adult child left home?

S _____ D _____ SS _____ SD _____

2. Do you anticipate that your adult child(ren) . . .

will return ___ may return ___ will not return ___.

3. Was your marriage relationship satisfying before your adult child(ren) left home? Yes ___ No ___ No difference ___.

4. If your adult children return, what would, in your guess, be the most likely reason(s)? (Circle those items which apply and put S, D, SS, or SD in the space provided.)

Examples: (Mental) / emotional problems SS or Mental / (emotional) problems S, 2-SD

College / other schooling _____ Termination of job / career _____

Eviction / end of lease / other _____ Armed Forces _____

Drug / alcohol problems _____ Mental / emotional problems _____

Financial problems: yours / husband's / adult child's _____

Injury / sickness / other physical problems _____

Divorce / separation / death of spouse _____

You wanted / needed them back home _____

My husband wanted / needed them back home _____

Other _____

C. If you have adult children who have always lived at home (they've never left), please answer the following questions.

1. When do you anticipate that your adult child(ren) will leave?

Never ___ I don't know ___ Probably within ___ (how many) years.

2. Was your marriage relationship satisfying before your child(ren) became an adult? Yes ___ No ___ No difference ___.

3. For what reasons, in their lives, are your adult children still living at home? (Circle those items which apply and put S, D, SS, or SD in the space provided.)

Examples: (Mental) / emotional problems SS or Mental / (emotional) problems S, 2-SD

College / other schooling _____ Termination of job / career _____

Divorce / separation / death of spouse _____ Armed Forces _____

Drug / alcohol problems _____ Mental / emotional problems _____

Financial problems: yours / husband's / adult child's _____

Injury / sickness / other physical problems _____

You wanted / needed them back home _____

My husband wanted / needed them back home _____

Other _____

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART II

Part II. Marriage and Family Survey

A. Circle the number on the scale for each item that best fits your answer to the question.

Item	extremely dissatisfied	very dissatisfied	somewhat dissatisfied	mixed	somewhat satisfied	very satisfied	extremely satisfied
1. How satisfied are you with your marriage?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. How satisfied are you with your wife as a spouse?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your wife?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

B. Read each statement and decide whether it is true as applied to you, your wife, or your marriage. If it is true as applied to you, your wife, or your marriage, circle the letter T. If it is false as it applies to you, your wife, or your marriage, circle the letter F.

- T F 1. There are times when my mate does things that make me unhappy.
- T F 2. My marriage is not a perfect success.
- T F 3. My mate has all of the qualities I've always wanted in a mate.
- T F 4. If my mate has any faults I am not aware of them.
- T F 5. My mate and I understand each other completely.
- T F 6. We are as well adjusted as any two persons in this world can be.
- T F 7. I have some needs that are not being met by my marriage.
- T F 8. Every new thing I have learned about my mate has pleased me.
- T F 9. There are times when I do not feel a great deal of love and affection for my mate.
- T F 10. I don't think anyone could possibly be happier than my mate and I when we are with one another.
- T F 11. My marriage could be happier than it is.
- T F 12. I don't think any couple could live together with greater harmony than my mate and I.
- T F 13. My mate completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.
- T F 14. I have never regretted my marriage, not even for a moment.
- T F 15. If every person in the world of the opposite sex had been available and willing to marry me, I could not have made a better choice.

Part II. Marriage and Family Survey

A. Circle the number on the scale for each item that best fits your answer to the question.

Item	extremely dissatisfied	very dissatisfied	somewhat dissatisfied	mixed	somewhat satisfied	very satisfied	extremely satisfied
1. How satisfied are you with your marriage?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. How satisfied are you with your husband as a spouse?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

B. Read each statement and decide whether it is true as applied to you, your husband, or your marriage. If it is true as applied to you, your husband, or your marriage, circle the letter T. If it is false as it applies to you, your husband, or your marriage, circle the letter F.

- T F 1. There are times when my mate does things that make me unhappy.
- T F 2. My marriage is not a perfect success.
- T F 3. My mate has all of the qualities I've always wanted in a mate.
- T F 4. If my mate has any faults I am not aware of them.
- T F 5. My mate and I understand each other completely.
- T F 6. We are as well adjusted as any two persons in this world can be.
- T F 7. I have some needs that are not being met by my marriage.
- T F 8. Every new thing I have learned about my mate has pleased me.
- T F 9. There are times when I do not feel a great deal of love and affection for my mate.
- T F 10. I don't think anyone could possibly be happier than my mate and I when we are with one another.
- T F 11. My marriage could be happier than it is.
- T F 12. I don't think any couple could live together with greater harmony than my mate and I.
- T F 13. My mate completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.
- T F 14. I have never regretted my marriage, not even for a moment.
- T F 15. If every person in the world of the opposite sex had been available and willing to marry me, I could not have made a better choice.

APPENDIX D

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL LETTER

Human Subject Committee



1690 N Warren (Bldg. 526B)
Tucson, Arizona 85724
(602) 626-6721 or 626-7575

December 28, 1990

Chad Bledsoe, B.A.
Section of Counseling and Guidance
School of Family & Consumer Resources
Education Bldg., Room 218
Main Campus

RE: ADULT CHILDREN WHO RETURN HOME TO LIVE: THE EFFECTS ON
PARENTS' MARITAL SATISFACTION

Dear Mr. Bledsoe:

We have received documents concerning your above referenced project. Regulations published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [45 CFR Part 46.10 (b) (3)] exempt this type of research from review by our Committee.

Please be advised that approval of this project and the requirement of a subject's consent form is to be determined by your department.

Thank you for informing us of your work. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact this office.

Sincerely yours,

William F. Denny

William F. Denny, M.D.
Chairman
Human Subjects Committee

WFD:rs

cc: Departmental/College Review Committee

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